» THE YEAR IN MUSIC 2002

MAGNET

REAL MUSIC ALTERNATIVES

The Rebel Is In
TOM PETTY
The Man Who's Not For Sale

SURVIVAL ACT
Why Pearl Jam Is Still Standing

CRIB NOTES
Joseph Arthur's Apartment Life

NORWAY IS BURNING
Kings Of Convenience, Röyksopp, Sondre Lerche, St. Thomas

»TOP 20 ALBUMS OF 2002

NO. 57 JAN/FEB 2003

02>

7 25274 83144 9

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PLUS: Beck • Nick Cave • Chrissie Hynde
Johnny Marr • Black Heart Procession

DRESSED IN BLACK

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HANK III

CRY, CRY, CRY
ROBBIE FULKS

BALLAD OF A TEENAGE QUEEN
RODNEY CROWELL

I GUESS THINGS HAPPEN THAT WAY
RAUL MALO

THERE YOU GO
CHUCK MEAD

GET RHYTHM
REV. HORTON HEAT

PACK UP YOUR SORROWS
BRUCE ROBISON AND KELLY WILLIS

RING OF FIRE
BILLY BURNETTE

LUTHER PLAYED THE BOOGIE
REDD VOLKAERT

BIG RIVER
ROSIE FLORES

FOLSOM PRISON BLUES
JAMES INTVELD

I STILL MISS SOMEONE
EARL POOLE BALL

I'M GONNA SIT ON THE PORCH AND PICK ON MY OLD GUITAR
DAMON BRAMBLETT

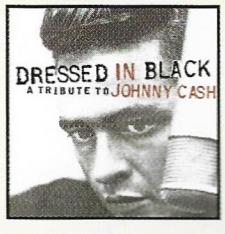
I WALK THE LINE
DALE WATSON

TRAIN OF LOVE
KENNY VAUGHAN

STRAIGHT A'S IN LOVE
EDDIE ANGEL

JACKSON
MANDY BARNETT & CHUCK MEAD

FLESH & BLOOD
CHRIS KNIGHT



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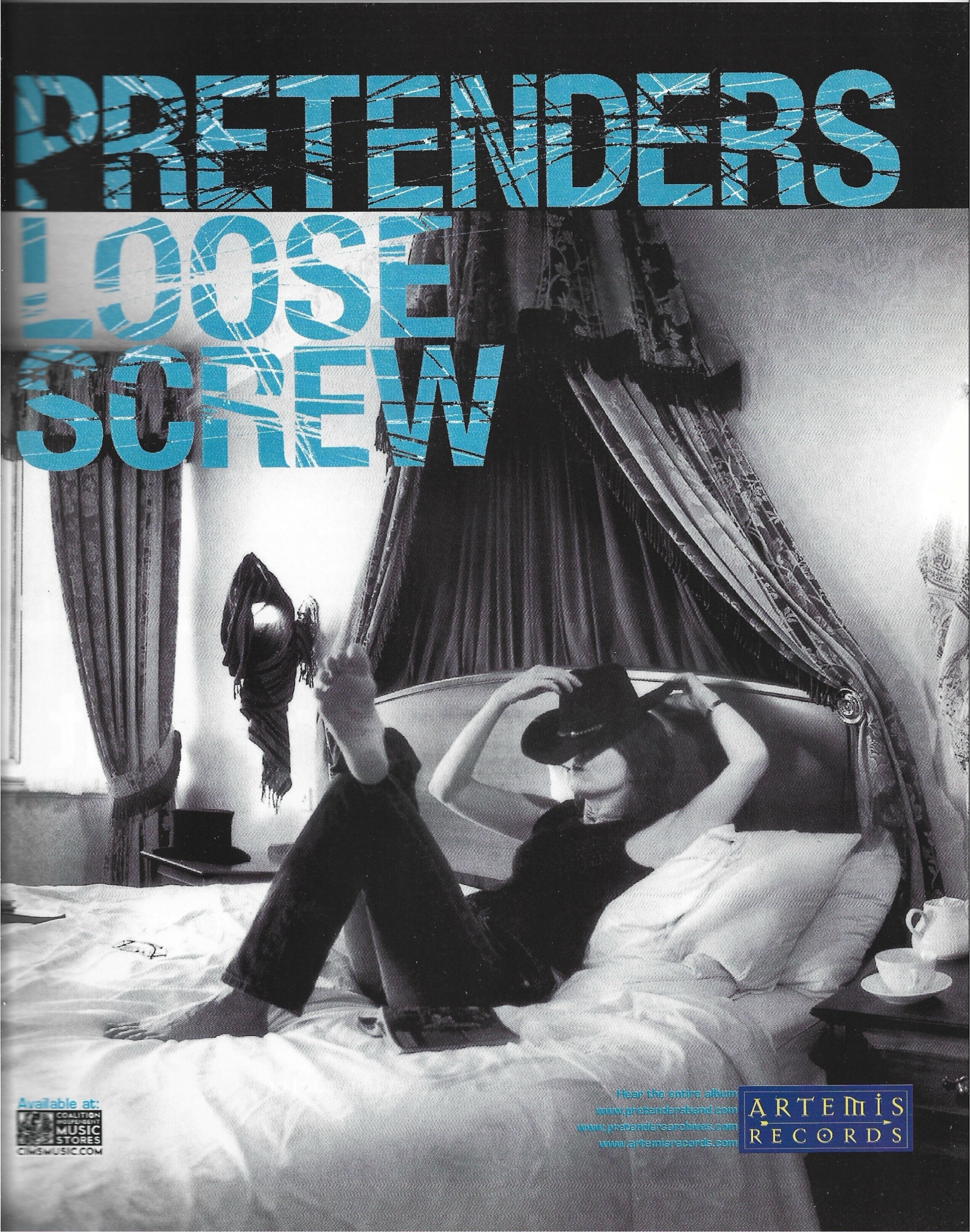
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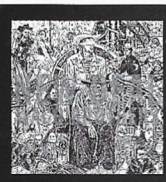
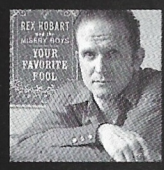


NEKO CASE 'Blacklisted' The eagerly awaited follow up to the acclaimed CD "Furnace Room Lullaby" An intensely intimate work that evokes a dark elegance with a hint of twang from one of the truly memorable voices of our times. Featuring appearances by CALEXICO, HOWE GELB, KELLY HOGAN, and more, this CD will be one of those records that everyone will want to hear. Don't say we didn't tell you so. BS 099 $15

REX HOBART & THE MISERY BOYS 'Your Favorite Fool'
Our favorite booby trap heroes are back with this Pete Anderson produced disc. Come hear the real stuff that all the Nashville pretenders pay wistful lip service to on all the glitzy awards shows. Spot on songwriting and sawdust smart musicianship make for a grand listen. No smoke machines or Def Leppard inspired country - guaranteed!!! BS 094 $14



JON RAUHOUSE'S 'Steel Guitar Air Show' His masterful steel and Hawaiian guitar stylings have graced the grooves of records by NEKO CASE, KELLY HOGAN, CALEXICO, SALLY TIMMS, THE MEKONS, THE WACO BROTHERS and more, and now it's payback time!!!! A swinging limited edition disc that features all the above folks, some of the bestest arrangements your likely to hear, and enough 23 skidoo western swing and jazz to roust grandma out of her funk. A genuine gem and flat out fun. BS 093 $14

'Making Singles, Drinking Doubles'
To celebrate the improbable event of our 100th release, we've pulled together lots of our out of print singles, EPs, and added some unreleased dandies. Tracks from WACO BROTHERS, NEKO CASE, KELLY HOGAN, RYAN ADAMS, ANDRE WILLIAMS, REX HOBART, THE MEAT PURVEYORS and more. BS 100 $14

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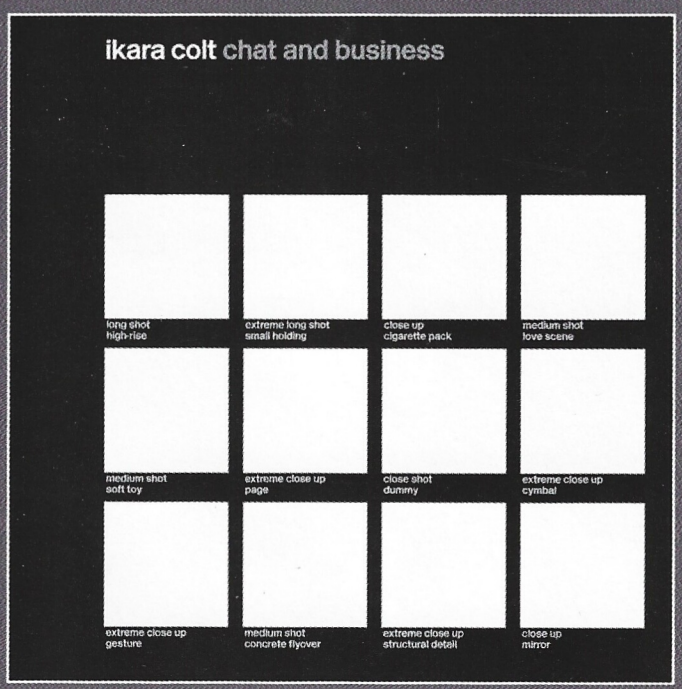

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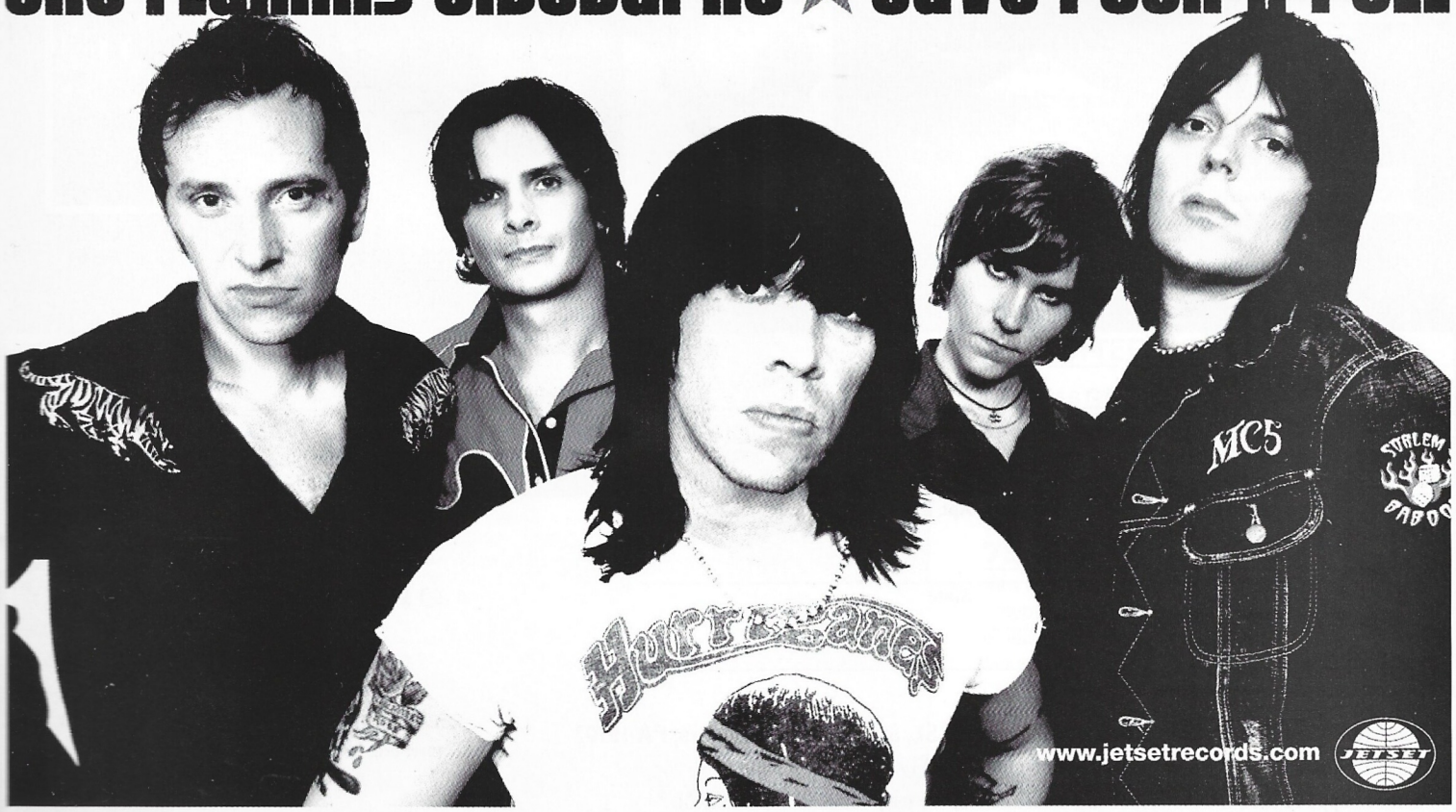

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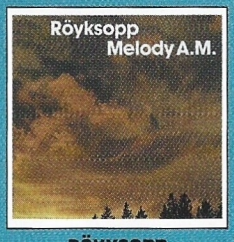
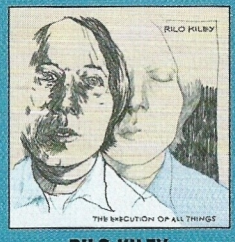


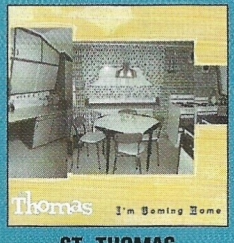
RÖYKSOPP
Melody A.M
[Astralwerks]



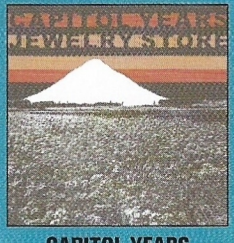
RILO KILEY
The Execution Of All Things
[Saddle Creek]

OXES
Oxxxes
[Monitor]

J MASCIS + THE FOG
Free So Free
[Ultimatum]



ST. THOMAS
I'm Coming Home
[Misra]



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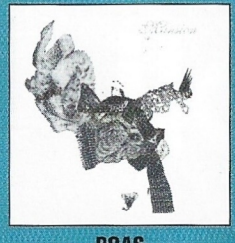
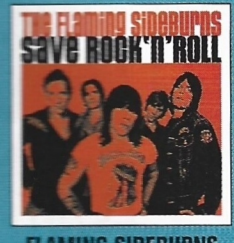


BOAS
Mansion
[Overcoat]

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Songs In The Key Of Z Vol. 2
[Gammon]



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NO. 57

<< REAL MUSIC ALTERNATIVES <<

Cover and contents photos of Tom Petty by Christian Lantry

COVER STORY

64 TOM PETTY

If all music gave you last year was a craving for lite beer; if you at any point paid $20 for a CD; if it seemed like the radio was trying to anesthetize the way that you feel, then Tom Petty—a rebel among rock's company men—is talking to you. **By Eric T. Miller**

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What sound went around in the underground: 2002's 20 best albums and 10 well-kept secrets; making amends with Jay Bennett and making trouble with Beck; plus mandatory trend watches on electroclash (new this year), Factory Records (more than 20 years old), rock's resurgence (happens every other year) and the super creeps in the music biz (happens every year).

52 PEARL JAM

Arena-sized superstars take it to the streets with new album *Riot Act*! Not really. But a decade into its long haul, Pearl Jam doesn't want to be dead or cool—just alive and loud. **By Fred Mills**

58 JOSEPH ARTHUR

MAGNET makes a house call to Arthur's New York City digs and discovers the forward-looking folkie has a backlog of beautiful music and strange artwork. But alas, no Cristal. **By Matthew Fritch**

72 DOORWAY TO NORWAY

Swedish rock explosion, please step aside; here comes the warm pop from Norway: Kings Of Convenience, Röyksopp, Sondre Lerche and St. Thomas. **By Tizzy Asher**

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12 MAGNIFIED

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79 REVIEWS

New releases from Add N To (X), Dot Allison, Aluminum Group, Badly Drawn Boy, Nick Cave, Elf Power, His Name Is Alive, Ivy, Luna, Johnny Marr, J Mascis + The Fog, Mountain Goats, Primal Scream, Saint Etienne, Sea And Cake, Sigur Rós, Suicide, Velvet Crush, Waco Brothers and more. Plus Singles/EPs, Reissues, Collectibles, Free/Jazz, Americana, Amplified and artwork by Joseph Arthur.

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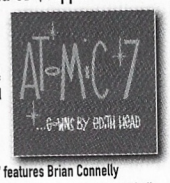
Looking Back At 2003

ATOMIC 7
Gowns by Edith Head CD $12ppd



Sometime between the birthdays of Joe Tex and Webb Pierce in the year 2001, an instrumental rock & roll band was born in a small oven in Toronto. Equally at home in Vegas dives, west Texas honky tonks or Hamilton elevators, Atomic 7 features Brian Connelly (Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet) on guitar, and are hell bent on reestablishing go go dancing in clubs across the country. Gowns by Edith Head is more elegant than a fabergé egg, more precious than fabergé bacon and due for release first-thing 2003 in the USA! Out already in Canada.

THE GAY 3-song 7" $4ppd

Featuring members of Kreviss, Superconductor, Tennessee Twin, I Mudder Accordion, Maow and Vancouver Nights, this is The Gay's debut release, a three song vinyl gem that will have you imagining the rebirth of Fleetwood Mac, Heart and the Partridge Family. Who needs another supergroup, you may ask? We do! Out beginning of January in the USA.

CAROLYN MARK
Terrible Hostess CD $12ppd

Album #2 from Canada's country queen, aka "The Other Corn Sister." "Judging by her new disc, shindigs at the Mark household are a helluva trip. Terrible Hostess has the unsteady feel of post-bacchanlian revelry.... She consistently channels the spirit of Patsy Cline, and at the same time deserves props for capturing the nauseous insanity of a true house party." (NOW, Toronto ON)

OPERATION MAKEOUT
Hang Loose CD $12ppd

Katie, Jesse and Anna "energetically march their way through 10 biting songs tied together by their reflections on being stuck in places that are neither here nor there.... Lapi gets entangled in an energy so electric, it leaves her vocals as uncontrollable and volatile as a water-soaked wire flailing at all sides." (The Gazette, London ON)

JOHN GULIAK
The Black Monk CD $12ppd

Guliak's strength is his deep, empathic voice and his bare-bones, from-the-streets and from-the-field approach. His stories sound honest and tough and true and all those other cowboy clichés that describe a fellow who tells it like it is—and then tells you a little bit more, maybe a little more than you wanted to know. Guliak's closest emotional kinfolk are bands like Winnipeg's Weakerthans; he's got that inner-city/rural split coursing through his chords and characters. Suitable accompaniment for driving across the prairie or walking through the concrete jungle. Take your pick. (Vue, Edmonton AB)

YOUNG AND SEXY
Stand Up for Your Mother CD $12ppd

"The alluring, opening guitar strains of 'Stand Up to Your Mother' carry the low chill of a Canadian winter before introducing the first of many striking harmonies between Pittman and his muse, vocalist Lucy Brain. The most amazing moments occur when Pittman and Brain join voices. This pairing adds fascinating intensity to the cooing "Television" and gels unforgettably in "Scott," where the harmonies explode across an expansive backdrop of piano and drums. Stand Up for Your Mother can appear daunting with its maze of misdirections, but have faith: Young and Sexy's seductively cerebral master plan really works." (Time Out New York)

MARK KLEINER
Love to Night CD $12ppd

The first concert of my live-music-watching career was Shaun Cassidy at the CNE Stadium in 1977. Fifteen years later, Welsh band The Pooh Sticks mulched '70s AM radio hits into perfect contemporary pop gems. The latest touchstone on my ceaseless quest for musical summer lovin' is Mark Kleiner." (eye, Toronto ON) "...a buoyant summertime delight." (Aquarius Records)

VOLUMIZER
Gaga for Gigi CD $12ppd

This is what you get when you mix ex-members of U-J3RK5, Pointed Sticks and Dishrags! "Volumizer plays simple punk songs not that much different from that of old punkers The Rezillos but somehow manage to repackage the music to fit into here and now. Volumizer is a throw-back to the old school punk days but they are completely relevent and almost refreshing in the Canadian punk scene." (Music Emissions)

VARIOUS
Tribute to Robert Altman's Nashville CD $12ppd

Performances by Neko Case, Kelly Hogan, Dallas Good and many many more!

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NOISE POP
2003: THE NEXT DECADE

San Francisco's celebrated music festival, Noise Pop, turns 11 February 25-March 2, 2003.

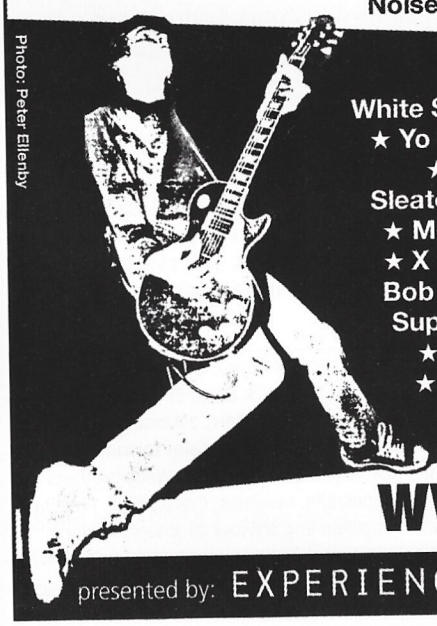

Photo: Peter Ellenby

Noise Pop's distinguished alum:
White Stripes ★ Flaming Lips ★ Jimmy Eat World ★ Yo La Tengo ★ Bright Eyes ★ The Donnas ★ ★ The Faint ★ Death Cab For Cutie ★ Sleater-Kinney ★ Neko Case ★ Folk Implosion ★ Modest Mouse ★ Jeff Tweedy (of Wilco) ★ ★ X ★ Magnetic Fields ★ Blonde Redhead ★ Bob Mould ★ Television ★ Big Star ★ Beulah Superchunk ★ Dismberment Plan ★ OK Go ★ Frank Black ★ New Pornographers ★ ★ The Pattern ★ and many, many more.

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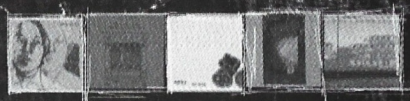

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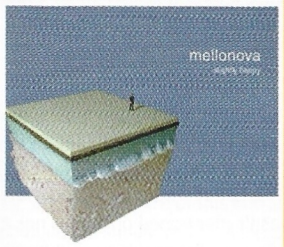
Experimental Aircraft
"Love For The Last Time"

The second album from this starry eyed noise-pop outfit features songs filled with bursts of guitar feedback and heartfelt melodies.

: : Rollerderby : :



Mellonova
"Slightly Happy"

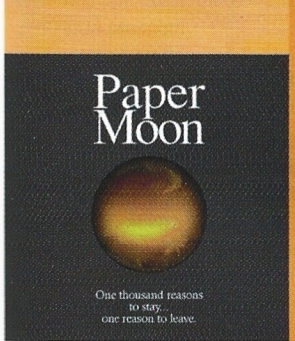
Atmospheric and dramatic, the debut album from this Canadian four-piece rides the cusp between dream-pop and space-rock.

: : Aporia Records : :

Morella's Forest
"Tiny Lights of Heaven"

Fourth full-length album of catchy, quirky pop from these 10-year veterans of the indie-rock world. From Dayton, OH.

: : Endearing Records & Big Beef Records : :



Paper Moon
"One Thousand Reason's To Stay... One Reason To Leave"

A blissful pop record filled with gorgeous female vocals, new wave tinged keyboards and dynamic yet melodic songs from members of b'ehl, the electrosonics and the bonaduces.

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Charlene

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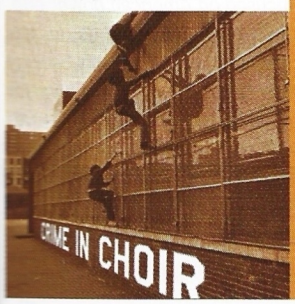

Crime In Choir
"Crime In Choir"

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: : Clairecords : :

Various Artists
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Third album from Canada's dreamiest export. MRS are back with their unique blend of aggressive delicacy. Their loud, loose instrumentation engulfs you in their warm melodies.

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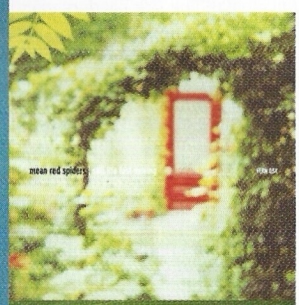

Paik
"The Orson Fader" CD

Jaw-dropping 3rd album from this intense detroit trio. Wide-open spaciousness heaping with gorgeous guitar noise. Unreal.

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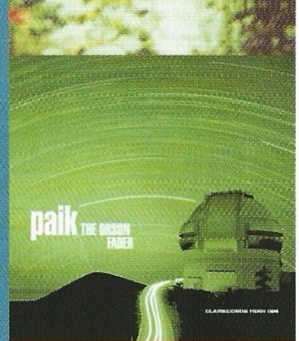

Secret Shine
"After Years" CD

Reissue collection of their long out-of-print material on Sarah Records. The definition of Dream Pop.

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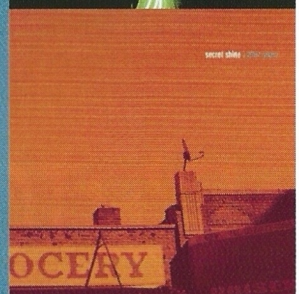

Electro Group / St. Avalanche
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LETTERS

POWER, CORRUPTION & LIES

First off, understand that I look forward to each issue of MAGNET. In fact, I hate that it's bi-monthly; I would love to see it sitting in my mailbox every month. So I can't tell you how disappointed I am with issue #56. The cover story on power pop? Holy crap—how boring! This section, which is way too long for what it covers, could easily have appeared in *Spin*, *Rolling Stone* or any of the other music-drivel magazines. But I don't expect it from MAGNET. What a boring genre of music. Do you think most of your readers even care? I mean, a short article about power pop, maybe. But this full-length feature? Hell no. I read about half the section before just getting bored and realizing life is way too short to read about the three-decade history of power pop.

Mike Murphy
Orlando, FL

Mike, we think our readers care a little too much. Just read the rest of the letters page.

Great issue on the forgotten heroes of power pop. It reminds me of seeing Matthew Sweet at Cain's Ballroom in the mid-'90s. At one point, Sweet introduced a Dwight Twilley cover. Expecting a roar of recognition, Sweet instead was met by a roomful of blank, youthful stares. "Uh, I think he's from your town," he explained.

Steve Higgins
Tulsa, OK

So Steve Albini has "profound hatred" for the Raspberries, dB's, Posies, Shoes, Big Star and Matthew Sweet, huh? It's "music for pussies and should be stopped"? I wonder how many bands have been inspired by Rapeman and Big Black. What a joke. It must be hell being so cool, Stevie boy.

Jeff Golightly
Memphis, TN

I always knew Steve Albini was a no-talent fuck. Now I know he doesn't have any taste, either. Long live power pop and all of us pussies who love it.

Chad Patterson
Knoxville, TN

Thank you for citing Velvet Crush's *In The Presence Of Greatness* as one of the 15 best power-pop albums. As much as I grapple with that goddamn "power pop" tag, I am honored to be included in such fine company. One more thing: Thanks for including Steve Albini's quote. There's nothing funnier than a 150-pound weakling calling someone else a pussy.

Ric Menck
Studio City, CA

Well, Velvet Crush's Ric Menck proves that, if anything in the world is consistent, it's that he's a complete prick. In the cover story on power pop, when discussing the current scene, Menck says, "I resent the International Pop Overthrow. It's the same one thousand people who get together every year to celebrate each other. It's like a *Dr. Who* convention." So what the fuck was Menck doing when I saw him standing at the bar at one of the venues during IPO '99? Doctoring the Tardis? Menck seems to have a desire to bite the hand that feeds. He's moaned for years now about the phrase "power pop," the artists who fall under that descriptive umbrella (even though he's been serving as a sideman for one of those artists, Matthew Sweet, on and off for ages) and the people who listen to their music. But who the hell does he think is buying his band's albums?

William E. Harris
Norfolk, VA

I find it awfully ironic that musicians like Ric Menck and Dennis Davison complain that the fans and the other bands on a mostly grunge bill don't get what they do, but they also complain that the groups at the International Pop Overthrow lack passion and vision. Who has less passion and vision? Someone who would rather play for a group of devoted fans and fellow musicians who are committed to the kind of music they write and play—whether it happens to be the "in" vibe of the moment or not—or someone who would prefer to play on a bill where he knows he doesn't really fit, just because the same bill also includes a few bands that are the current media darlings? I doubt anyone who attended the same shows at 2002's IPO in Los Angeles I did would claim bands like RockFour or Peachfuzz lacked passion and vision. The IPO exists precisely because so many indie guys with guitars who record in their basements *do* have passion and vision.

Shoshana Price
San Francisco, CA

Please tell me the comments attributed to Ken Stringfellow in your power-pop article were actually uttered by Bob Pollard, because only then would they make sense (except for the woeful stuff about the Clash, which is ludicrous no matter who said it). If this isn't the case, Stringfellow suffers from pathetic delusions as well as being a pandering songwriter. Sucks to be him, I guess.

Reed Jackson
Seattle, WA

Kudos to all involved for putting together your compelling and educational power-pop issue. I would like to point out, however, an interesting and somewhat recent purveyor of the craft who was overlooked: Adam Schmitt. Having somehow released two discs on Reprise (*World So Bright* and *Illiterature*) in the mid-'90s, he fell off the radar before returning with *Demolition* in 2001 on Parasol. I cannot recommend his work highly enough and would like to note that copies of both of his Reprise releases can usually be found for less than three dollars.

Jeremy Hils
Mableton, GA

I just finished reading your power-pop issue cover-to-cover, and I can't figure out whether to be depressed or ecstatic that my favorite artist—Marshall Crenshaw (power pop or not)—wasn't mentioned once. I'm not a power-pop guy, but I am one of those "pussies" Steve Albini hates. Sometimes that means I listen to the dB's or Matthew Sweet. But back to Crenshaw. His self-titled first album is an absolute classic of the genre, a record that distills summertime and optimism and being in love, all with jangly guitars and incredible melodies. To leave him out is to leave an incomplete picture of power pop and deny someone who knows nothing about him or the genre the possibility of discovering him.

Kevin Walsh
Princeton, NJ

Well, you've got to start (and end) somewhere. A couple corrections are in order. The Raspberries' first, self-titled LP was the one that smelled like raspberries when you cracked the shrinkwrap, not *Side Three*. I found a sealed copy of the LP some 17 years after its release, and it still, uh, smelled. I believe the Vibrators (who predated the Soft Boys) were the band that backed Alex Chilton on his *Live In London* set. Whoever picked the top 15 albums flat-out whiffed by not mentioning the Records' first LP, *Shades In Bed*, which had two classic power-pop 45s, "Starry Eyes" and "Teenarama." And the Nazz didn't get mentioned enough considering its members were nearly perfect executors of the genre while almost predating it.

Kelly Plumber
Cedar Falls, IA

Last things first? We felt the Nazz did, in fact, predate power pop, and referred to the group as such in the article. The Records are indeed great; however, they're British, and the piece focused on American power pop. (Fred Mills also wrote about the Records in the Collectibles column in the same issue.) Chilton's backing band did include Matthew Seligman and Morris Windsor from the Soft Boys, but we admit we a told a half-truth (at best) on that one. And we were totally wrong about the Raspberries thing; thanks for pointing that out.

I'm still amazed a style of music that's been around for 30 years can remain so underappreciated, especially

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with the popularity of Cheap Trick and all the retrospective Big Star worship abounding in indie circles. (And anyway, what were the late releases by "punk" giants the Replacements and Hüsker Dü if not power-pop records?) However, I think there's been one major power-pop act overlooked that has, in fact, been very commercially successful. While their massive popularity, silly marketing as "heartland rockers" and latter-day roots-rock fixations may lead people to forget their beginnings as bell-bottomed, Rickenbacker-toting, working-class rockers. Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers are the very definition of Southern power pop. How else can you define "Even The Losers," "The Waiting" and "American Girl"? I guess that answers the question of what would happen if a power-pop group attains longterm mainstream success: Everyone simply forgets it's a power-pop group. Also, many thanks for the article on Doug Sahm, one of America's unsung heroes.

Cody C. Gaisser
Gainesville, FL

The power-pop edition of MAGNET was the first issue I ever read through or, in this case, bought. I like the cover, a nod to Bomp!, which was (and still is) a forerunner in promoting underground groups with fresh, original talent. What I found a little perplexing was the absence of this fine label within the section itself. *The Roots Of Power Pop* compilation should've at least received an honorable mention, since it includes one of the greatest power-pop songs to date: the Nashville Ramblers' "The Trains." It's hateful and, at the same time, incredibly beautiful, with a more obvious '60s influence than most power-pop tunes. Another missing link in the '70s power-pop article is the Real Kids. I first heard them when I was 15 years old (I'm now 20) and never looked back. "All Kindsa Girls" is a power-pop masterpiece, playing almost like a tribute to the Beach Boys' "California Girls." I do commend you for your mention of DMZ, but the Lyres would've been more fitting in a pop category. Just listen to *Lyres, Lyres* and *On Fyre* and you'll see what I mean. I was impressed by the inclusion of Chris Stamey and Mitch Easter; the dB's were quite possibly the only avant-garde power-pop band ever. Let's Active was also taking the genre to a bizarre new level with fantastic results.

Kristin Messina
Coral Springs, FL

Two Rundgren-influenced (and produced) bands you didn't mention were the Pursuit Of Happiness from Canada and 12 Rods out of Minneapolis. Both groups convey not only the heartbreak of great power pop but also a quirky creativity sadly lacking in most pop music today.

Jim Marquis
Seattle, WA

You devoted an entire issue to the lost art of power pop without even a mention of its Michelangelo: Emitt Rhodes. All three of his albums on ABC/Dunhill came out during prime time (1970-1973). He played, arranged and recorded each at home with masterful results. A victim of the music business, Rhodes is an inspiration to anyone who really wants to do it all by yourself. I thought his recent exposure on *The Royal Tenenbaums* soundtrack would've been enough of a wake-up call to give him the hipness he so richly deserves. You could've looked him up. He still lives in the same house in Hawthorne, Calif., where he recorded two of his records. Hell, he might even be in the phone book. An otherwise great issue.

Tony Stakelin
Lexington, KY

I really enjoyed the power-pop issue. I wish you had mentioned Artful Dodger, a great band that, like so many others, never got the success it deserved.

Kevin Downs
Vienna, VA

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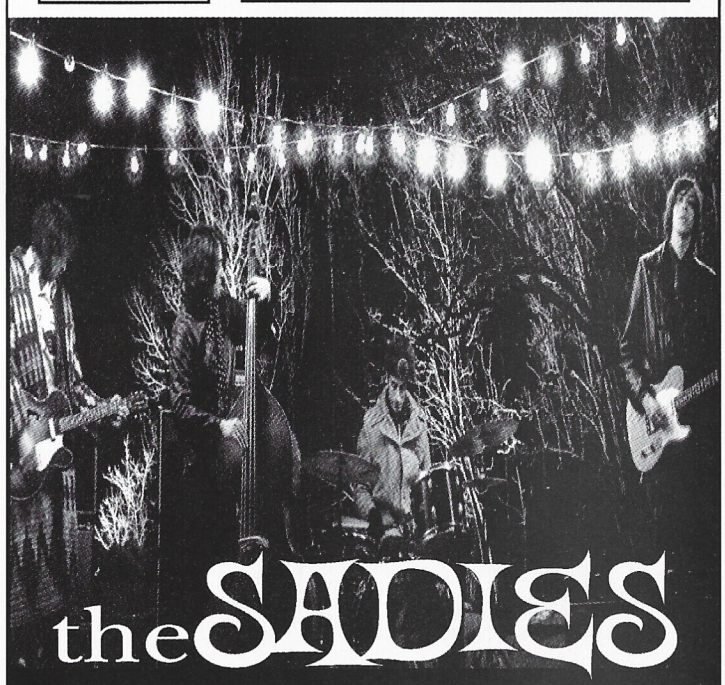

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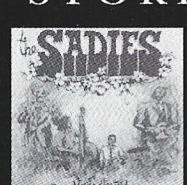
STORIES OFTEN TOLD



When listening to STORIES OFTEN TOLD one can envision THE SADIES on the road carrying steamer trunks full of martini glasses and discount wines, saddlebags stuffed with Byrds and Stanley Brothers records, and surfboards strapped to the roof. Spooky campfire wails, dusty western trails, garage rave-ups, lounge time cool downs, and psych adventures all knock heads on their latest tremendous effort- brought to you by Yep Roc Records.

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BLACK HEART PROCESSI

"You know, spooky-tropical."

This is how Pall Jenkins, leader of the Black Heart Procession, describes his band's latest album, *Amore Del Tropico* (Touch And Go). "We were trying to envision some sort of music that might happen in this hot-night, tropical-vibe place, where these weird things happen," he says. "Where there was a murder."

Jenkins is obviously talking about a place more exotic and dangerous than Tallahassee, the football-crowded city where the Procession is playing tonight. Sure, in Florida—or the group's homebase of San Diego—you can get sunburned on Halloween and people leave squashed mosquitoes on their walls, but the bumper-to-bumper SUVs waiting to park at the Cracker Barrel are a different kind of spooky.

"We were trying to build a little world of our own that would help us escape living in Southern California," says Jenkins. "A create-music, shut-the-drapes kind of thing."

Black Heart Procession could be considered a five-year fever dream unfolding while Three Mile Pilot—the original band of principal BHP songwriters Jenkins and Tobias Nathaniel—is in a coma. BHP's previous albums, perfunctorily titled *1*, *2* and *3*, plodded to spindly piano riffs, sounding as if they should be packaged in shrouds instead of plastic cases. *Amore Del Tropico* consciously expands on the group's forlorn-nomad/gothic-carnival aesthetic, boasting choral backup vocals, salsa rhythms, doom-cabaret ballads and more synth swaths. Think Lambchop's *Nixon* helmed by the Cryptkeeper. Or a wind-up Afghan Whigs trying to gig their way out of purgatory.

"We wanted to stretch out and find some new places in music, to push the envelope a little bit," says Jenkins. "So this album is a collage. One thing I always hope for is to make records that progress. I want to feel like, 'Oh, this is new. I haven't done this before.' Plus, I still like mystery in music. I don't like to spell things out."

Take "mystery" literally. *Amore Del Tropico* is a concept album documenting the bizarre aftermath of a crime of passion. Rather than being reduced to a brute, the story's protagonist, whom Jenkins explains is "this guy Luigi," finds his existence tremendously complicated by his rage. By the closing track, "The One Who Has Disappeared," Luigi's sanity has become quite slippery. The band is cur-

DENNIS KLEIMAN

rently editing a film to accompany the songs that Touch And Go will release as a DVD.

"Each song is basically a chapter in the story," says Jenkins. "One song is the interrogation, one is where he's being booked, one is where the murder is happening. So it follows him through his days with his girlfriend, then through this whole murder mystery, which I can't say too much about because it'd kind of give it away."

Jenkins won't admit whether it was noir, absurdism or David Lynch that inspired the film. "I think everything influences everything," he says. "The story just happened. It was a reaction to the music." The song "Before The People," he explains, "is where Luigi is before the jury, contemplating his guilt and sanity, but outside of the story and movie, that song is also about accepting something into your heart or into your life that you accept almost unwillingly. You find yourself believing in something without really realizing you believe it."

Though it may not be obvious from a superficial listen to Black Heart's something-wicked-this-way-strums catalog, the band consistently indulges in levity. Just as Franz Kafka supposedly found his portraits of the dehumanized and alienated funny, the group's songs can exaggerate despair and amplify the doldrums to the point of emotional slapstick. Black Heart's concerts commonly involve giant rubber horsehead masks, fake mustaches, tinted goggles and flashing red electronic heart-badges. In Tallahassee, the venue's on-site policeman approaches Jenkins to point out the band's similarities to Emerson Lake & Palmer. Jenkins smiles, flashing his gold tooth, and acknowledges that his father enjoyed ELP's music.

Interestingly for an album about a fading self, Jenkins' work gets credited to the name Paulo Zappoli. "My mother's maiden name is Zappoli," he says, "and Paulo is what everyone called me in Sicily when I was a kid. I felt like the playing and the music this time was Paulo Zappoli, while Pall Jenkins was engineering and recording."

He thinks a minute. "There wasn't really reasoning behind the name," he says. "Things just happen. Why all of a sudden do you choose to wear a different color of pants one day? It doesn't really matter. You can change back."

—William Bowers

(l-r): Tobias Nathaniel, Pall Jenkins, Matt Resovich, Matt Parker, Joe Plummer

MEN OF LETTERS

MUSIC CRITICS UNLEASH POWERFUL ANAGRAMS

It's been ages since the spirit of originality left the rotting corpse of music criticism (though the haiku record reviews in now-dormant zine *Bunnyhop* once offered brief hope), so even tongue-in-cheek stabs at the form seem like genius moves. *Warm Voices Rearranged: Anagram Record Reviews* (Drag City), a 73-page book by Brandan Kearney and Gregg Turkington, passes judgment by shuffling the letters in the artist name and album title to form cogent opinions. Thus, "Elvis Costello, *This Year's Model*" becomes "Elite rot. His vocals? Melodyless!"

"No, no pot here," says Turkington (also known as intentionally lame comedian Neil Hamburger) when asked about the inspiration for the book. "It's just another in a long line of attempts to entertain a handful of people."

With rare exception, the reviews by Kearney and Turkington slay the artist/album at hand. The authors insist the mystical properties of anagrams were working through them subconsciously, citing the cabalistic prophecies contained in an anagram such as "Madam Curie/came radium." Supernatural or not, it was hard work.

Television *Marquee Moon* = Memo: Quiet Verlaine soon!

"For some reason, the Beatles titles are especially hard to anagrammatize accurately," says Turkington, who estimates the rate of production at one anagram per hour. "Obviously, they knew what they were doing when they named those albums."

"The Jimi Hendrix Experience was pretty hard, too," adds Kearney. "All those x's!"

When asked about the possibility of publishing other music-related wordplay in the future, Turkington replies that work has begun on "the first serious full-scale biography of '70s soft-rock icons Seals & Crofts, but we're writing it entirely as one long palindrome."

Meanwhile, Kearney agrees to take an anagrammatical request: "MAGNET Magazine: Real Music Alternatives/Gazing men evaluate mainstream articles."

—Matthew Fritch

CRUDELY DRAWN

STICK MEN WITH RAY GUNS' PSYCHOTIC PUNK COMPILED IN ORDERLY FASHION

From 1981 to 1988, long-forgotten Dallas quartet Stick Men With Ray Guns was at the underground Texas noise-punk forefront, lobbing lyrical bombs about serial killers, televangelists and killing your white-trash mom. The band never managed an album, but a new 23-track, 76-minute anthology, *Some People Deserve To Suffer* (Emperor Jones), compiles studio material and live recordings.

"We developed a sound that was unlike anything else you've ever heard," says Stick Men guitarist Clarke Blacker. "We were very aggressive live and that has never come across on any releases."

Playing with Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, Misfits and many others throughout the '80s, Stick Men—led by oddball street poet/ranting frontman Bobby Soxx—terrorized Texas audiences. By 1987, Soxx had begun to feel the effects of substance abuse, and the band split a year later; Soxx died in 2000 of liver failure.

"Bobby Soxx wasn't so much confrontational as he was funny," remembers the 52-year-old Blacker. "He acted like some kind of demented stand-up comedian, howling and screaming and being ridiculous. He would do anything onstage, and the audience knew it." Soxx's lyrics were complicated and intelligent. ("Preachers shake cups like bartenders for tips/They charge and condemn me for the trash from my lips," from "Christian Rat Attack"). Each song—from "Pee Pee In The Disco Mommy (I Gotta)" to "Nazi Cowboys (On Welfare)"—showcased the band's blasphemous, devil-may-care attitude.

"We put our psychosis right out front for everyone to see," says Blacker. "It wasn't an act, and we could not have cared less. We were hostile, stupid, confrontational, obnoxious and extremely loud."

—Ron Bally

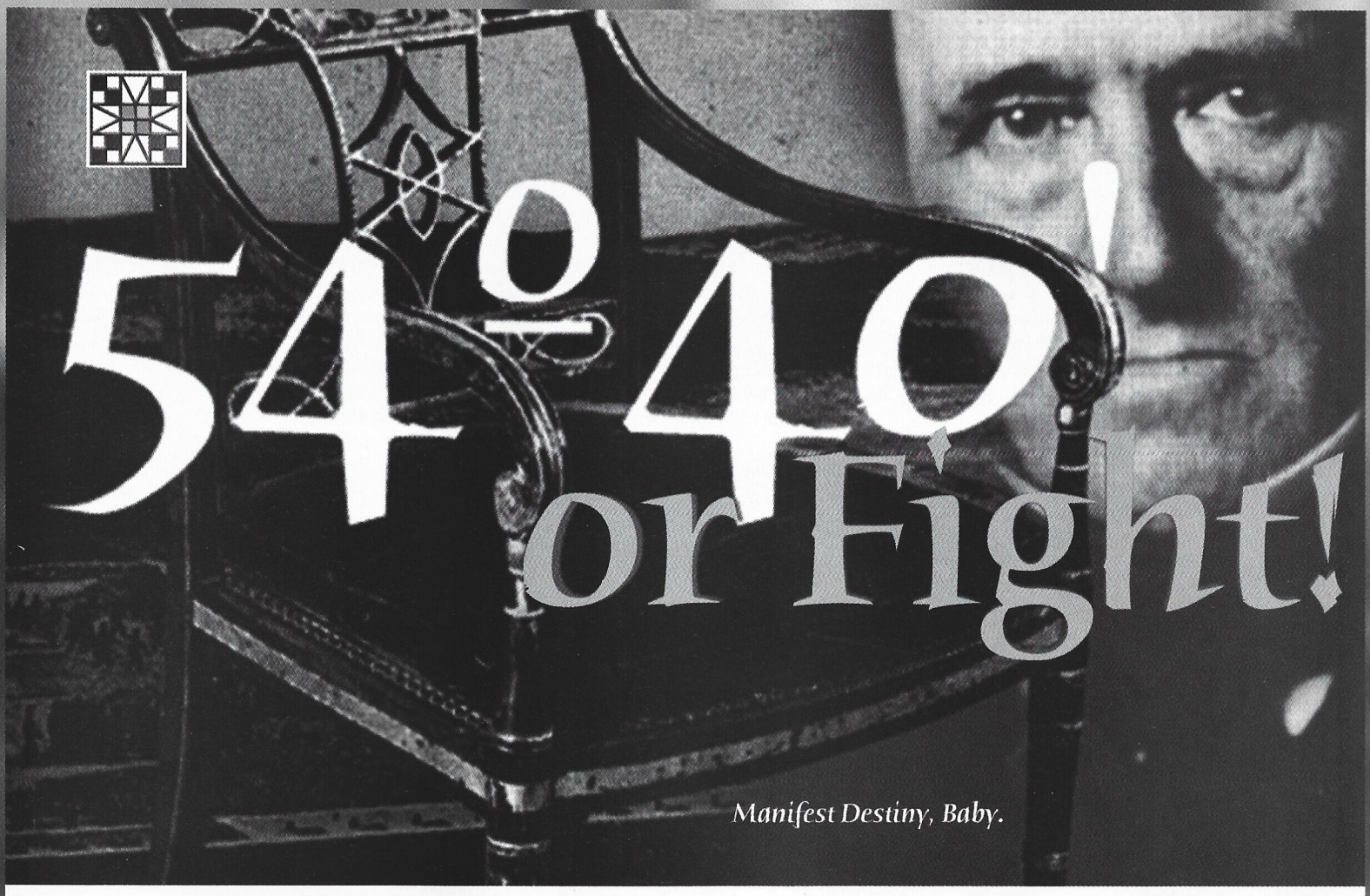
NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Hot Snakes may be the most abrasive punk band since **Drive Like Jehu**, which was the most confrontational group from San Diego since **Pitchfork**. The muscle behind all three are singers/guitarists **Rick Froberg** and **John Reis** (a.k.a. **Speedo** of **Rocket From The Crypt**). With the reissue of Jehu's 1994 major-label debut (and bow) *Yank Crime*, mercilessly mangled guitars and vocal cords are the old loud made new again. "It really isn't that raw," says Reis of *Yank Crime*, which came out on Interscope, the same label that signed RFTC. "It's just got a lot of screaming and chirping feedback and other forms of premeditated noise. There was a large contingent at Interscope who scratched their heads and thought, 'How do I sell this crap?' They just didn't understand where we were coming from. To a lesser degree, the same went for Rocket. To them, Rocket didn't sound like Nirvana, but Jehu **really, really didn't sound like Nirvana." The reissue, released on Reis' Swami imprint, adds three bonus tracks; Jehu split shortly after** *Yank Crime*. "Most of our fans were either born-again or reformed punkers who got hard or moist for our wailing," says Reis. "Most critics got it way wrong as I remember. I believe it was MAGNET that compared Rick's vocals to Perry Farrell's. Shit like that made us want to piss on people's heads." The MAGNET Archives Dept. could not confirm such an egregious comparison was ever printed.

Drive Like Jehu

Lifter Puller was another band that made bearable the terms "punk" and "1990s" in the same sentence. The two-CD *Soft Rock* (Self-Starter Foundation) compiles the Minneapolis-via-Boston group's first two albums along with singles and compilation tracks. Like Archers Of Loaf with Tourette's, Lifter Puller—which broke up in 2000—benefited from barking frontman and former stockbroker **Craig Finn**'s tangled verse ("Your tonsils must've tasted like Pine-Sol/In the back mackin' pack after pack of 20 menthols," from "Kool NYC") and vignettes (the sorority-girl-gone-crackhead tale of "Secret Santa Cruz").

In the realm of the living, glam-slammin' Hoosier R&B punks **John Wilkes Booze**—an offshoot of Bloomington, Ind., psych-popsters the **Impossible Shapes**—have just issued their fifth EP in less than 12 months. Each volume of *The Five Pillars Of Soul* series pays tribute to, respectively, Melvin Van Peebles, Tania (Patty) Hearst, Albert Ayler, Marc Bolan and Yoko Ono. (Of the latter's selection, guitarist **Eric Weddle** explains, "She saved rock 'n' roll by breaking up the Beatles ... We are all fans of her art and her freak-out side.") With song titles like "Sweetback's Gonna Make It" and "Marc Bolan Makes Me Want To Fuck," the concept indeed runs high. The music runs lowdown, though, like the Blues Explosion, Stooges, Brian Jonestown Massacre and Funkadelic pureed in a rusty blender. All entries come in silk-screened sleeves; liner notes outline each Pillar's cultural brilliance. Check www.johnwilkesbooze.com for details.



Out 01.03

POLK 009 **Eyes of Autumn**
Hello CD

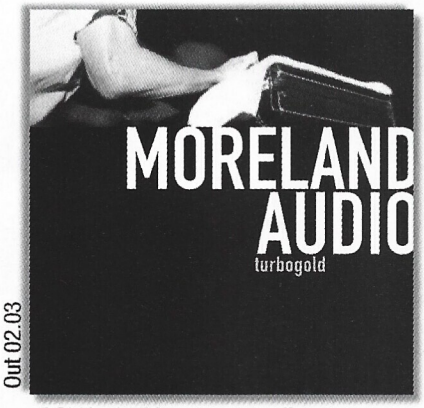
Folks shouldn't be this good this young. Stunning debut long-player from humble 17-20 year-old Seattle-area trio whose drummer is still in high school. Think Roadside Monument meets Death Cab for Cutie meets Dilute, then forget what you thought; triangulation will only get you so far. On tour for the rest of their lives, post-graduation, Class of 2003.

Out Now

POLK 012 **Abilene**
Two Guns, Twin Arrows CD

The album for which some critic's pined when reviewing Abilene's spacious debut. Abilene has upped the ante, and slowly, one-by-one, laid eight aces across the table, all the while maintaining a grim poker face. Bristling yet atmospheric processionals cresting atop deep grooves. Musical lineage: June of '44, Hoover, Lustre King, Chisel.drill.hammer, and HiM.

Out 02.03



POLK 011 **Moreland Audio**
Turbogold CD

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OXES »ICE CREAM FOR FREAKS

They *smell* like oxes (or, technically, oxen). Drummer Chris Freeland and guitarists Marc Miller and Nat Fowler are doused in the kind of aftershow musk exclusively brewed in the tour van of an overactive instrumental-metal band from Baltimore. Tonight, Oxes have sweated through the fourth of five U.S. tour dates opening for Wire, an arrangement that came about when Colin Newman saw Freeland's banana trick at All Tomorrow's Parties in England last April. Freeland disturbed the festival's dour post-rock mood by wandering toward center stage mid-song and pretending to call his mother on a banana phone.

Which doesn't exactly sound hilarious on paper. Neither do reports of Oxes' live show, which is comedic performance art enabled by the wireless guitars of Miller and Fowler, who roam through the audience ("Excuse me, I'm in a band," says Miller to part the crowd) bumming cigarettes and mounting bars and staircases while executing Shellac-like lurches of syncopated noise. Fowler sometimes keeps his remote device in a fanny pack with a belt bearing the words "I Like Boys." This is what Fowler has to say when confronted: "I call them ass satchels. I don't like the word 'fanny.'" Freeland uses planned breaks in drumming to approach the microphone and confront disbelievers.

"Some people look like they're not having fun or look like they don't know what fun is anymore," says Fowler. "I make it my job to try to make them smile. But some people just won't budge." Fowler proceeds to tell an elaborate story about a "douchebag" in the audience at a San Francisco show.

Miller and Freeland met in the fourth grade ("Marc came over to my house wearing an R.E.M. T-shirt," says Freeland) and later connected with Fowler at the University of Maryland. Freeland, seeking to lure Fowler away from another band, turned up at a gig wearing an American-flag T-shirt with the handwritten logo, "Burn This One, Nat Fowler." The three decided to start a metal band. "We wanted to rip off the Champs," says Freeland, referring to the early, truncated name of Drag City's instro-metal band. "It's not cool to rip off the Fucking Champs, but it's really cool to rip off the Champs."

Shortly before Oxes' first practice in 1998, the three band members bonded by going to a porno theater on a mutual dare. "It was one of the most grueling hour-and-a-halves of our lives," says Miller. "It was like watching open-heart surgery after a while."

"Plus," adds Freeland, "we were all shocked to see Marc's mom on the screen."

And with that comment, the interview speeds downhill toward the locker room. Freeland swears he was a masturbating extra in the John Waters film *Cecil B Demented*. "You can see the back of my head," he says. "No shit." It's getting late, the tales might be getting tall and the questions don't seem to matter anymore.

MAGNET: Why are you guys in a band, anyway?

Freeland: We forgot.

Miller: Just coasting.

Fowler: Are we still doing the interview?

Oxes' latest album, *Oxxxes*, is out now on Monitor Records.

—Matthew Fritch

(l-r): Nat Fowler, Marc Miller, Chris Freeland

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BOAS »THE FIRST WALTZ

If you were in a band, you could hate them. Boas headlined their first gig and were offered a record deal when they finished the set. Then, before the Chicago quintet's debut album saw the light of day, the group hit the road opening for Wilco and playing to 1,500 people the first night.

Most bands wouldn't want their atmospheric pressure, though. Boas consistently attract comparisons to Neil Young and the Band, and the parallels are spooky. Singer/guitarist John Klos sounds like Young, albeit with Mick Jagger undertones. Klos' Pennsylvania high-school buddy, pianist/arranger Jacob Smith (Boas' most serious musician), is his Garth Hudson counterpart. Graeme Gibson and Gabe McDonough—the lyrical, fist-tight rhythm section—are from Canada and have played together since childhood. With Chicagoan Jonathan van Herik on guitar, the group confesses its debt to those '60s and '70s outfits who themselves were updating older American music.

Boas' debut, *Mansion* (Overcoat), is furnished with vintage references as disparate as beat jazz and the Doors, with equal parts Stones and Beatles and even a dollop of psychedelia—all in the sort of understated, experimental arrangements practically franchised by Chicago scenesters like Tortoise, Sea And Cake and Jim O'Rourke.

"We're looking back to classic kind of sounds, classic guitar music, but then trying to bring it forward and do something new with it," says McDonough. "All my favorite bands from the '60s and '70s were always looking back to earlier blues music or, with the Band, even Civil War kind of stuff. This is what I think we're doing."

All but van Herik arrived in the Windy City just in the last three years and wound up hanging out together at Rainbo, a bar frequented by Wilco's Leroy Bach and John Stirratt. "We've kind of come from these middle-of-nowhere suburbs," says McDonough, "from that same perpetual boredom of listening to records and thinking about music and creating this fantasy world in our record collections."

Live, Boas' songs rock harder, and the audience revels in the band's enthusiasm for serendipity. "Every show is different, depending on our moods, how it feels up onstage," says van Herik. "We just expand ideas and play a lot more. I don't think any song is ever finished."

Klos agrees: "The record really does feel unfinished, but I've kinda gotten to enjoy that in a way that it's up to [the listener] to finish it."

Boas songs are springboards to dynamic extrapolations onstage, but you would never confuse the group with a jam band. "I think the difference is that there's experimentation and things, but it's mainly songs," says Klos. "We're just a simple-songs kind of band."

Ah, but it's the simple songs we remember, 30 years later.

—Linda Ray

(l-r): Gabe McDonough, Graeme Gibson, Jacob Smith, Jonathan van Herik, John Klos

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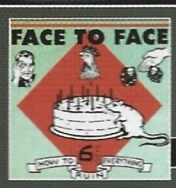

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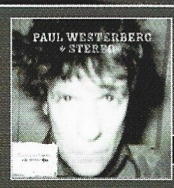

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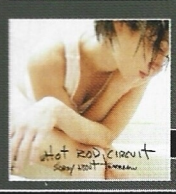

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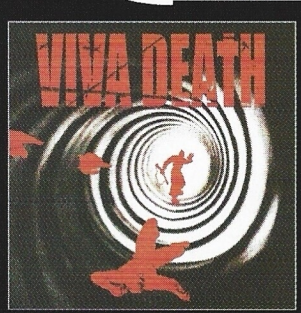

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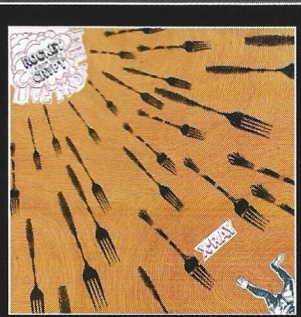

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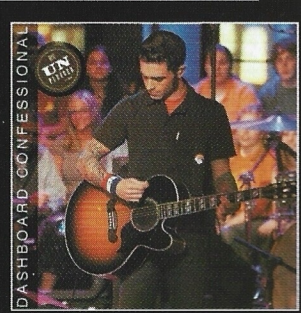

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» PERFECT FROM NOW ON

RILO KILEY

Los Angeles quartet Rilo Kiley gets called a lot of things. Spirited indie pop. Jangly rock. Sentimental folk. None of which seems too far afield, since at any one time in their lives, the band members have been obsessed with the Cure, Built To Spill, Modest Mouse, Liz Phair, Bright Eyes and Elliott Smith. Singer/multi-instrumentalist Jenny Lewis pares things down: "I just say we're a rock band." Fair enough.

After its self-released, home-recorded first album, *Take Offs And Landings*, was reissued by Barsuk Records in 2001, the band toured extensively, becoming fast friends with key players in the soon-to-be-way-cool Omaha music scene (Bright Eyes, Cursive, Good Life, Faint). Rilo Kiley then enlisted Saddle Creek co-founder/Lullaby For The Working Class member Mike Mogis to produce album number two, *The Execution Of All Things* (Saddle Creek).

"We did our homework for the first time ever," says Lewis of her introduction to a "real" studio. "We demoed the songs and talked about them and decided we wanted to bring our live sound to our recordings. With this record, we wanted to rock out a little more."

Fittingly, *Execution* is gussied up with colorful arrangements, Lewis' stately keyboard runs, the occasional pedal steel and even a few well-placed trumpets. Lewis can get her Tanya Donelly on as much as her Aimee Mann, and her lyrics are a comfortable mix of sentiment and snappy wit ("Soldiers come quickly, I feel the earth beneath my feet/I'm feeling badly, but it's not an attempt at decency"), and her voice can flip from saccharine to barbed in a snap (as heard on the bipolar "A Better Son/Daughter"). Guitarist/vocalist Blake Sennett sounds like Elliott Smith with a grin; he's an equal partner, even though Lewis sings the majority of the tunes. "When I write a song," says Lewis, "the person I really want to impress is Blake."

Rilo Kiley's songwriting team met as teenagers in Los Angeles. Both were child actors; Lewis was in *Troop Beverly Hills*, and Sennett appeared (albeit briefly) in such sitcoms as *Boy Meets World*, *Family Ties* and *Growing Pains*. (Comments Lewis: "Acting? Boo!") Lewis—who grew up in Las Vegas, where her parents had a lounge act—found Sennett unsympathetic to her early material. "I played him some of my stuff, and he was not impressed," says Lewis. "I thought he was pretty cool and he thought I was a big dork." But after she put down vocals to some of Sennett's recorded guitar parts, he changed his mind and they've been playing together ever since, chronologically: in living rooms, at L.A. clubs, across the country, with their heroes (Smith, Superchunk, Bright Eyes).

"So much has happened, it's like, 'Oh wow, maybe we're *not* impostors,'" says Lewis, who's also playing in a new group called the Postal Service (which includes Death Cab For Cutie's Ben Gibbard and Jimmy Tamborello of Dntel and Strictly Ballroom). "Sometimes I wake up and think, 'Oh my god, I've fooled them all!' We played music because we felt that we had to play music. We never thought we'd actually be able to pay our rent and stuff, which we still aren't."

—*Beth Wawerna*

(l-r): Jason Boesel, Jenny Lewis, Pierre deReeder, Blake Sennett

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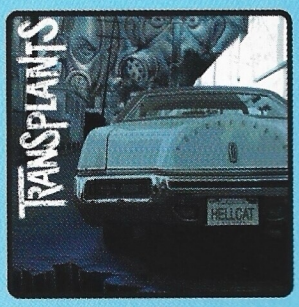
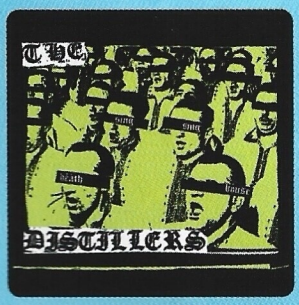


TRANSPLANTS
transplants



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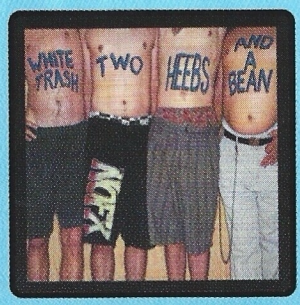

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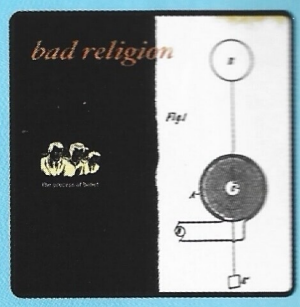

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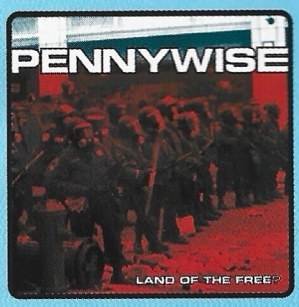

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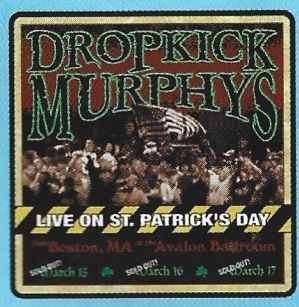

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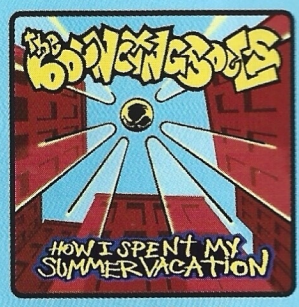

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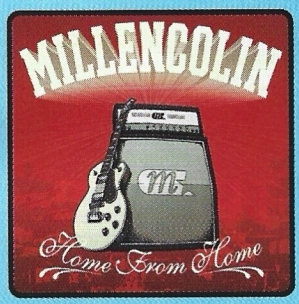

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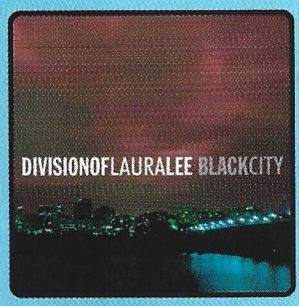

DIVISION OF LAURA LEE
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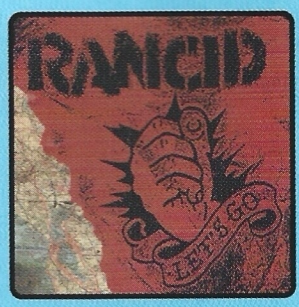

RANCID
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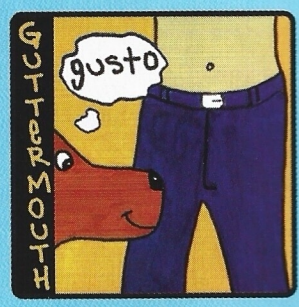

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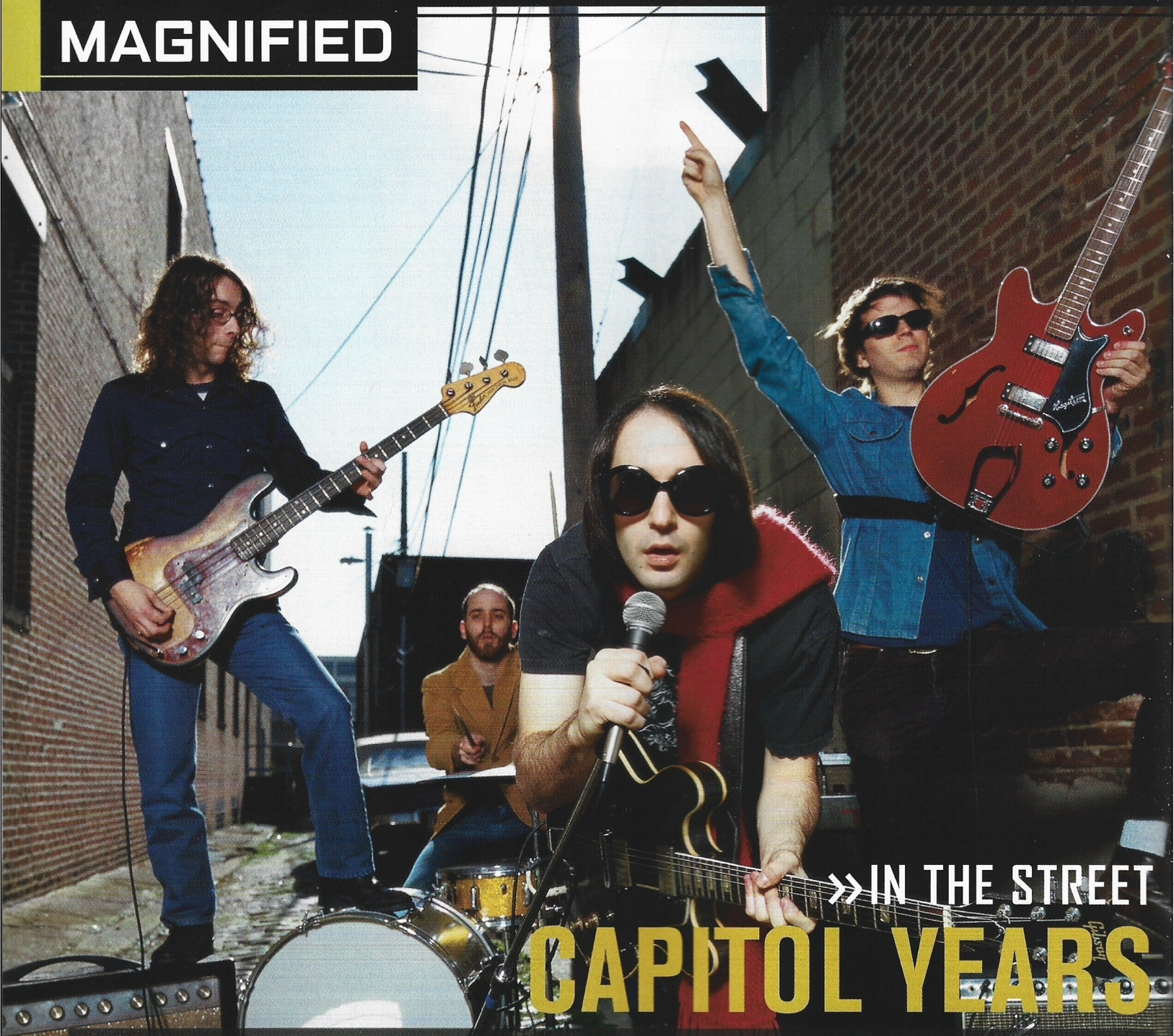

»IN THE STREET

CAPITOL YEARS

The term "hidden treasure" (see MAGNET's 2001 year-end issue) doesn't begin to describe the Capitol Years' debut, *Meet Yr Acres*. It's an album so criminally overlooked that any fan of retro-shaded pop with a slight space-cadet glow who missed it should be sentenced to five years hard labor.

An even split between warm and fuzzy folk and tongue-wagging rock, *Meet Yr Acres* was a classic case of aiming low and shooting high for singer/guitarist Shai Halperin, who, at the time, *was* the Capitol Years. Aided by producer Thom Monahan (Pernice Brothers, Beachwood Sparks), Halperin played and recorded every note, mostly in his Philadelphia apartment. Which explains why the album sounds like you're next door in 4B, ear to the wall, swearing you hear the *White Album* and Beck's *One Foot In The Grave* spinning backward simultaneously.

"I would sing really close to the mic and really quiet, like I didn't want my neighbors hearing," says Halperin. "Except for 'Roller's Row' (recorded with Monahan at his Northampton, Mass., studio), the rest of it I'm trying not to make noise or have the neighbors hear what I'm doing."

After finishing the album, Halperin enlisted bassist Dave Wayne Daniels and drummer Sir Kyle Lloyd. ("He's been knighted by the gods of rock, I guess," says Halperin of Lloyd's title. "Not that gods do knighting.") Guitarist Jeff Van Newkirk joined in time for a five-week, self-booked tour in early 2002. It was on the road that the band's live show morphed from a standard-issue, guys-with-guitars hoedown to the meth-quake of a performance the group presently delivers, where careening into walls, bouncing off kick drums and colliding with each other are commonplace.

"Playing two shows with the Mooney Suzuki made us amp it up," says Halperin of the band's live antics. "They were insane, spazzing all over the place. We thought, 'We've really got to amp it up.' And we did. Ever since then, we've just been trying to keep it going."

Barely pausing long enough to do laundry, the Capitol Years rode their tour momentum right into the recording studio, tracking and mixing the new six-song *Jewelry Store* EP (Full Frame) in seven frantic days with Monahan and Philly-based engineer Brian McTear (Burning Brides, Swearing At Motorists).

Departing from the intimacy and acoustic guitars of the debut, *Jewelry Store* is the riff-driven sound of a loose-limbed rock band taking the stage by storm in a strange town after several stiff drinks with the locals. Honking chords and opaque mod-rock lyrics like those found on the fuck-me groove of "Japanese Store" are what this very raw—and so very rock 'n' roll—affair is all about.

"We set it up so that we would come back from tour and run right in and try to see what we got," says Halperin. "It's the full band; everybody's loud, everybody's crazy, for better and worse. Our live show is a big part of what we do, and we think it translates."

—Patrick Berkery

(l-r): Dave Wayne Daniels, Sir Kyle Lloyd, Shai Halperin, Jeff Van Newkirk

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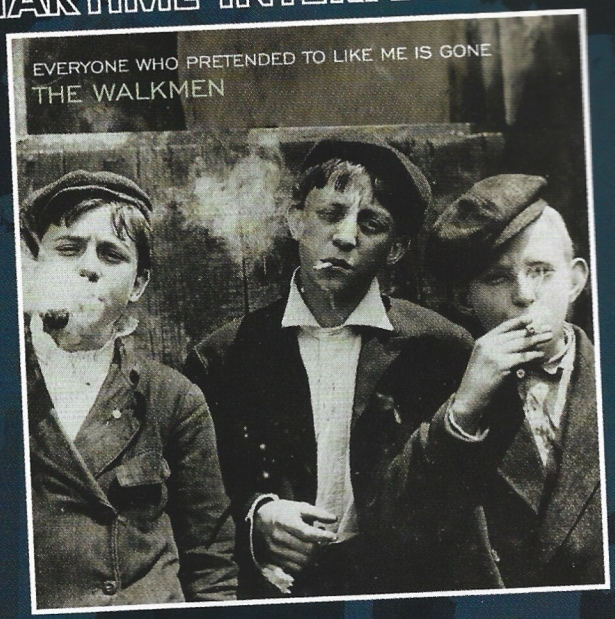

THE WALKMEN
"Everyone Who Pretended To Like Me is Gone"

FRENCH KICKS
"One Time Bells"

THE NATURAL HISTORY
"S/T"

"A roster so consistently stellar—signees include The Walkmen, French Kicks, and Beach Boys-esque songwriter Brendan Benson—that it calls to mind powerhouse indie labels of yore like Sub Pop and SST." —*New York Magazine*

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"ON THE RECORD"

A CONVERSATION WITH ... CHRISSIE HYNDE

The new *Loose Screw* (Artemis) is a winning hint that Pretenders leader Chrissie Hynde has stanched her leaking relevance after a decade and change of few and forgettable albums. Suffering from neither the forced raggedness of 1994's grunge-conscious *Last Of The Independents* nor the robotic limpness of 1999's overproduced *Viva El Amor*, *Loose Screw* sounds as though it's been written with an ear on the pillow rather than to the ground. "Complex Person" sets a familiar Hynde lyrical touchstone (love as submission) atop a casual island groove like a paper umbrella in a cold cocktail; her voice still tears but never folds. "I Should Of" marries a lush string arrangement to her most naked vocal ever—a marvel of stubbornness, regret and orgasmic insinuation. This mix of come hither and go fuck yourself is ingrained not only in Hynde's writing and singing but also in her flinty/sexy persona. In conversation, she comes across as funny, dismissive, self-effacing, hostile, passionate about music and fed up with it. But Hynde insists she welcomes being corrected, and she seems aware of her self-contradictory nature. The person whose most-heard song in recent years, "I'll Stand By You," emerged from a collaboration with a pair of noted "song doctors" says she's never heard that phrase and is amused by its accuracy. And though her support of PETA reportedly extends to a clause in her will giving the animal-rights group permission to use Hynde's image however it likes after she dies, she still holds a place in her heart for a rocker's black leather. She might say that all you need to know about a politician is whether he eats meat, but it takes more than a dossier and an hour of conversation to figure out Chrissie Hynde.

During an online chat you did a few years ago, someone asked you whether your approach to songwriting has changed. You said no. If your own approach hasn't changed, how do you adapt to different cowriters?
Those days of sitting in a room alone with absolutely nothing to do—which is how I started, getting stuff off my chest—are over. I have something to do now. I have a place to live. Things have changed. Writing on your own is very satisfying, but collaborating is much more fun. I'm not very gadget-friendly; I'm not interested. I've always sat down with a guitar. I haven't even used a tape recorder for the most part.

Robert Christgau chided you in print after *Last Of The Independents* for working with song doctors Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly (Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors," Heart's "Alone").
That's a good call, critically. I went in cold-bloodedly with those guys, and I felt personally humiliated by it, by writing specifically to get on the radio. I thought it was conceding to the audience. But pop music is supposed to be accessible. I want the music to be accessible. I don't want to suffer; I want to have fun. I knew Tom and Billy were professional songwriters—I was, too, but I was a hippie acidhead, not disciplined.

Paul Weller recently told *Mojo* he started eating meat again because he "was fucking hungry." What do you think the hazards are with regard to changing one's mind when one is in the public eye and outspoken?
He's just a flake. We're not carnivores anyway, and he knows that. There's no reason to be hungry if you're in fucking England. For chrissakes, Paul, wake up. If he'd been in the Sudan for five months, I might say, "Have a sandwich." I don't change my mind on moral commitments. It's not like saying, "I don't think I'll wear flares anymore—oh, I think I look good in flares after all." That all comes from having a belief system. That's what faith is all about. It's not something you change your mind on. I hope he gets fucking fat.

I have heard women say they have to work harder to prove themselves. I haven't had to work as hard. Guys can see when I walk in the studio that I don't have too much technical ability. I'm not ashamed to say, "Don't play above the third dot on the bass." They can see I don't have any pretensions, though I'm not an idiot. I've never found any form of discrimination. Some of the great players I've met have complimented me on my rhythm-guitar playing, and they're not trying to get in my pants. I've been treated fairly above and beyond the call. The women I know who are successful never worried about what men—or other women—thought. Who would have told Joni Mitchell to push her tits up or sing about blow jobs?

"POP MUSIC IS SUPPOSED TO BE ACCESSIBLE. I DON'T WANT TO SUFFER; I WANT TO HAVE FUN."

At a 1996 Joni Mitchell concert, your fellow audience member Carly Simon got pissed off at you for yelling positive things at the stage. I take it the idea of age or status limiting fans' behavior offends you?
That was my version of John Lennon with the Kotex on his head. I probably pissed off about two-thirds of the audience, and Joni probably thought I was a total asshole. Not that this excuses me, but I had drunk an entire pint of Jägermeister, and I thought she was so fucking awesome. I'll never be treated with the reverence Joni Mitchell gets. I'm not the musician she is, and she's not the asshole I am.

VH-1 recently included you on its list of 100 sexiest musicians. Where's the line between something like that being flattering and demeaning?
I wasn't trying to invent anything in the first place. I've tried not wearing jeans. I hate all those lists. You're talking to someone who's not ambitious or competitive. I shy away from that sort of thing. Having said that, there's nothing better than being part of a scene where people are making music, a climate. It's meant to be flattering, though, and rock music is about being sexy.

Is sex appeal the burden of the artist or the music?
It's a hard call. It's not like it used to be. Janis Joplin's music is sexy because it was so real. I'm happy if my music is sexy or whatever. All the people I've ever liked have had that sex appeal. The kiss of death is to try to look sexy, though. It's one thing to look like you've had a wash, but trying is so fucking lame.

Someone once asked you about Lilith Fair, and you said you hadn't heard of it. Do you think that a sorority or female coalition does anything to close the gap between men and women musicians?

How do you feel about Napster and its aftermath?
What's Napster? [*File-swapping explanation follows*] My take on things is that it's better to learn to make fire and live in a tent than learn how to use a computer. But I'm all for bootlegging. If you're gonna penalize some kid for bringing a tape recorder to a show, you're a cunt, basically. If a record still costs $20, who can afford that? The import Pretenders hits disc costs $30? Fuck it; download it. I think bands should make a fixed fee for an album, and they should make their money on the road. The whole thing is so far up its own ass. I think there should be a cap on how much money you make, an enforced cap over how much a person could get.

There's the sports analogy about highly paid professionals having only so long to enjoy their abilities.
I'm vain and greedy, too, but fuck off—go work at a florist shop. We're usually not talking about great humanitarians.

How was it opening for the Stones this fall?
The only Stones anecdote I'll tell is that one night, I went backstage with (Pretenders guitarist) Adam (Seymour). Keith Richards and Ron Wood were playing pool. We were surveying the food, all the delicacies on ice. Keith's a gentleman. He asked if he could offer us anything, so I asked for a rollup—some root tobacco, a common English expression. So Keith whispers in someone's ear, and the guy disappears and comes back with two big spliffs. He lights up and says, "Man's gotta eat." I told him that wasn't what I meant.

Did you join Keith?
Woman's gotta eat.

—Scott Wilson

ATTENTION, CAMPERS

Back On The Trail Of Camper Van Beethoven

Camper Van Beethoven has released a five-CD boxed set and reunited after 13 years for a tour behind its recently issued cover of Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk*, but David Lowery doesn't think it's news.

"We've been playing these shows off and on for the last few years," says singer/guitarist Lowery, talking about Cracker's Traveling Apothecary tours, which have evolved to include performances by CVB bassist Victor Krummenacher, guitarist Greg Lisher and multi-instrumentalist Jonathan Segel. "So this summer, we decided to just try to do a straight Camper show and see if anybody still cared. And in way, they did, because we sold out every show."

Cigarettes And Carrot Juice: The Santa Cruz Years (spinART/Cooking Vinyl) goes a long way toward illuminating the band's ragged, uneven past. When CVB began in 1983 in Santa Cruz, Calif., playing what the group called "surrealist absurdist folk," there were plenty of people who hated it. In the pre-indie-rock era, there wasn't much of an audience for a band that applied punk attitude to blues, ska, surf rock, campfire songs and Balkan folk music. Camper kept going anyway, scoring at college radio with 1985's "Take The Skinheads Bowling" (recently made the theme song to Michael Moore's documentary *Bowling For Columbine*) and reaching maturity with 1986's *Camper Van Beethoven II & III*. The band continued to get weirder, piling irony on top of irony until it split after 1989's major-label *Key Lime Pie*, which critics panned and fans called a sell-out.

"We fought all the time, we were based on fighting—that's where our whole energy came from," says Krummenacher. "I mean, for a band without very much money, it was as chaotic as it could get. If we were the Rolling Stones, we would've been dead. We broke up in Sweden in the middle of a tour, two or three weeks left to go."

Lowery has kept going back to Camper, releasing an album of remastered rarities and b-sides as 1993's *Camper Vantiquities* (included in the boxed set) and recouping the greatest misses on 2000's *Camper Van Beethoven Is Dead: Long Live Camper Van Beethoven*. In August, the band resurrected its 1986 cover of the decidedly un-hip *Tusk*, an album taped while CVB was holed up in a ski cabin with a four-track recorder, a handful of vinyl records and prescription painkillers. In addition, solo albums are in the pipeline for both Krummenacher (his fourth) and Lowery (his first, under the alias David Charles). Krummenacher says if the tour behind the boxed set goes well, Camper Van Beethoven may enter the studio again to extend its legacy.

"There's been a revisionist history of the '80s, where everything has been rewritten to lead to Nirvana," says Lowery. "I feel like we opened the doors for a lot of bands that came after us in the '90s. Certainly, we weren't the only people playing around with country and folk music, mixing it through the alternative world. But I can't count all the different bands that I've played with and that I'm friends with who were totally into Camper Van Beethoven, who know the songs and actually even cover them. It's cool, but it's kind of odd, because if everybody who claims they'd been supporting us had really been there in 1990, we probably wouldn't have broken up."

—Kenny Berkowitz

ODD MAN OUT

IRWIN CHUSID COMPILES "SONGS IN THE KEY OF Z VOL. 2"

If not for Irwin Chusid, the Shaggs' now-legendary ramshackle-rock classic *Philosophy Of The World* would've been forgotten. So, too, would the sincere-yet-askew, primitive sounds of Jandek, Joe Meek, the Legendary Stardust Cowboy, B.J. Snowden and many others essayed in his 2000 book *Songs In The Key Of Z: The Curious Universe Of Outsider Music* and compiled on its companion CD. (Better-known artists such as Daniel Johnston, Captain Beefheart and Wesley Willis were also included.) Out now is a sequel CD that doesn't monkey with the formula—hence *Songs In The Key Of Z Vol. 2* (Gammon), a compilation as wonderful as the first volume.

"The album is a landmark in every sense—the music, the variety of artists, the package design, the cover," says Chusid of volume two, which features songs by the previous edition's discoveries (Snowden, Luie Luie, Congresswoman Malinda Jackson Parker) along with new oddities such as late West Virginia hobo Wayne's folky ode "Deep Bosom Woman" and Eddie Murray's pitch-challenged "Stepping High Dance."

Where renegade art is concerned, Chusid's pedigree is impeccable. He's the co-host/producer of the 25-year-old *Incorrect Music Hour* on freeform radio station WFMU; author of liner notes for Rhino Records' *Golden Throats* series of celebrity song covers; producer of archival releases for space-age composer Esquivel and cartoon-music maven Raymond Scott; promoter of the Shaggs and Langley Schools Music Project through production of—and relentless publicity for—both acts.

Chusid considers outsider music to be that which is made without regard for certain elemental facets—like knowing how to play an instrument or sing. "It's music that people with mainstream tastes would consider wrong, inept or perhaps woefully naive," he says, "created by people whose intentions are sincere and who lack rudimentary self-awareness of how truly removed from reality their efforts sound."

Chusid modestly refuses to take responsibility for any success anointed on the artists he champions. Surprisingly, both the book and *Vol. 1* have sold very well. "It's hard to say what's the best thing to come of the book," says Chusid, ignoring the fact that Artisan Entertainment recently bought the rights to the Shaggs' story; it could be destined for the big screen. "It's really a personal question, and any good outcome would just sound self-serving."

—A.D. Amorosi

Guided By Voices
Box
5xCD (Scat)

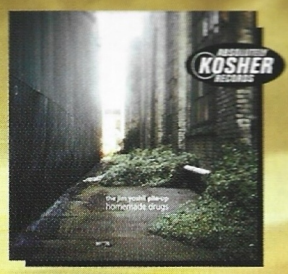
Long awaited reissue of this 5xCD box set featuring the band's first four self-released albums (1987-1990) plus a disc of high-grade rarities

Jawbreaker
Etc.
CD/2xLP (Blackball)

20 songs from 1988-1995. Includes all comp tracks, B-sides, and 5 unreleased outtakes. Over 70 minutes of music!

Wire
Read & Burn 01
CD (Pink Flag)

Newly reformed post-punk legends deliver the first recording in a series of new works and performances planned for this year through 2003



The Jim Yoshii Pile-up
Homemade Drugs
CD (Absolutely Kosher)

Gently weaving guitars, simple graceful rhythms and a potent, gorgeous tenor produce moments of keen insight and emotionally riveting climaxes

The Coup
Steal This Double Album
2xCD (FOAD)

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Warlocks
Phoenix
CD/LP (Birdman)

Former Beck and Brian Jonestown Massacre guitarist Bobby Hecksher leads an eight-man, four-guitar line-up through 70-plus minutes of inspired psychedelic pop

Solace
13
CD (MeteorCity)

Piledriving riff-rock called "wicked and devastatingly heavy" by CMJ. Second outing from former members of GODSPEED; guest appearance by WINO!

Electric Eels
The Eyeball of Hell
CD/2xLP (Scat)

You wanna talk about the real junk? Here's the definitive collection by Cleveland's proto-punk art terrorists, recorded in 1975.

Franklin Bruno
A Cat May Look At A Queen
CD (Absolutely Kosher)

Nothing Painted Blue front-man returns with this wonderfully wistful offering of tinpan alley pop tunes. Equal parts Gershwin and the Go-Betweens

Amalgamated Sons Of Rest
s/t
CD EP/12-inch (Galaxia)

Modern troubadours Will Oldham, Alasdair Roberts, and Jason Molina teamed up at Rove Studios to collaborate on six spare ballads-two sung by each-that evoke British Isles and Saharan sweeps

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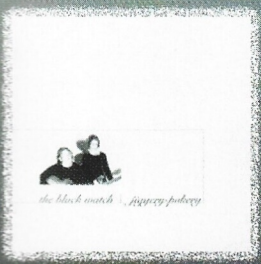

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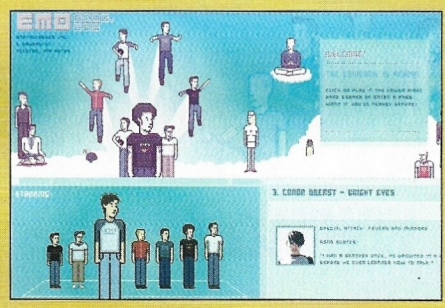
Fun Subjects: Emo, Metal, Math

www.desertplanet.com
Just as Man Or Astro-Man? ushered in an era of psycho-spastic space hits, Finland's Desert Planet is turning video-game-infused rock concoctions into a household genre. The band's *Asteroid Hopper* takes arcade-style heroics to new heights with tracks that infuse ColecoVision and Nintendo bleeps with pounding bass lines and catchy pop hooks. Songs like "Joysticker" and "Salsa Kong" turn 8-bit arcade games into danceable tunes that are an odd combo of booty-shaking and nostalgia. Be sure to download the title track's hilarious video, which features guitarist Jukka Tarkiainen traipsing around Finland in an alien-green motorcycle helmet, blasting intergalactic foes.

—Jonah Brucker-Cohen

www.emogame.com
"Fuckin' hell! Someone's kidnapped the Get Up Kids." It's true: Aerosmith's Steven Tyler has abducted Kansas City's beloved emo icons, and it's up to you to save them in Jason Oda's vulgar, stereotype-perpetuating, utterly hilarious online game. You'll play one of seven wussy superheroes, including Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst, as you traverse a Jeep Wrangler-infested suburbia and a Courtney Love-inhabited dungeon. To fend off villains (Dave Matthews fans, et al), you'll throw seven-inch records and draw on über-geeky special powers. Best of all, you'll get the chance to tell Creed's Scott Stapp, "Stop doing that thing with your voice!"



—Paul Clements

www.metal-sludge.com
Though the bulk of this site is of interest only to scary, diehard metalheads, there are two sections that will crack up even humorless emo youngsters. The Mug Shot Gallery is pretty amusing, in particular the one of Ozzy Osbourne where he eerily resembles Kid Rock. The latter also makes an embarrassing appearance (sporting a Vanilla Ice-like high-top fade) in the Exposed area, where the embarrassing pasts—high-school yearbook photos, early band publicity shots, etc.—of rockers ranging from Mötley Crüe to Weezer (nice hair, Rivers) are on display. The shots of Tommy Lee in some sort of ballet attire, complete with the caption "Keepin' it real ... real gay," are priceless, and Brian "Marilyn Manson" Warner's mullet is one for the ages.

—Matt Hickey

www.silkworm.net
Silkworm bassist Tim Midgett has devised the Musical Correctness Calculator, a formula that the creators of *Star Search* apparently could never wrap their brains around: (c@ + E) x (rP + iP + T) = mc. (The variables are as follows: c@ = coherent aesthetic; E = execution; rP = real or true power; iP = imagined power; and T being a tension adjustment—see Web site for that calculation. And don't worry, the site does all this math for you.) Mathematically plausible, sure, but objective? Sort of. According to recent average results from users, out of a highest possible 400 points, Steely Dan scores 277.92, while Mogwai scores 184.94. No fair. The MCC brings new meaning to the annoying—though now less-popular—term "math rock" (and, like math rock itself, is a geeky waste of time).

—Matthew Fritch

LABEL PROFILE

Arena Rock Recording Company

Owners
Greg Glover and Dan Ralph

Employees
Aaron Romanello (label manager) and Dawn Pierson (makes it all look nice/the warden)

Label goal
Keep putting out great music, blah-blah-blah. Naw, just selling bands off to a major at the highest bid after we develop them.

Tell us the Harvey Danger success story.
The band had sent a demo around to all the major labels, and it had been passed on; Arena Rock was the best they could do at the time. We recorded it for $1,000 and put it out because it was a great pop record, period. It began to get airplay in Seattle, then spread like wildfire. We got great reviews (even in MAGNET), and then once Greg brought it to London Records, it got panned because it was a "hit." It ended up going gold (500,000 sold), so we think we can claim that we signed a gold record.

Current roster of artists
Superdrag, Gloria Record, Mink Lungs, Boggs, Calla, Secret Machines, Pilot To Gunner, Serene, On-air-library, Birdwatcher, Home, Carlsonics, Mono, Stina Nordenstam, Inouk, Grand Mal

Upcoming releases
Creeper Lagoon EP, Liars/Oneida split EP and albums by Calla, Pilot To Gunner, Secret Machines, Carlsonics and Grand Mal

How did you finance your first release?
Myth: like everyone else in our neighborhood—trust funds. Truth: Greg waited tables and Dan worked at a chewing-gum factory.

How did you get the name Arena Rock?
Greg grew up in the late '70s. His life was like *Almost Famous* without the broads. Single mom babysits young Gregory by taking him to see Cheap Trick, Kiss and Ted Nugent.

Most satisfying aspect of running an indie label
Not having someone tell us that a Tom Lord-Alge remix will fix everything.

What would we be surprised to learn about Arena Rock?
That we don't put out Styx, Foreigner and Kansas records.

First records purchased
Alice Cooper, *Goes To Hell*; Steely Dan, *Aja*

(l-r): Romanello, Glover, Ralph, Pierson

If Arena Rock could release a new record by any band, what would it be?
Pavement's *Slanted And Enchanted* (the first time) or the Flaming Lips with Ronald back on guitar.

What do you say when people ask you what kind of music Arena Rock puts out?
We use a new catchphrase called "alternative."

Arena Rock was ahead of the curve with 2001's *This Is Next Year* compilation. The next year, everyone started talking about Brooklyn, to the point of it being annoying. How'd you know?
We'd seen several compilations of Brooklyn hip hop but never a documentation of the various indie artists and couldn't believe no one else had done it. ARRCo has "the hunch."

What are the latest exploits of the Arena Rock van?
The van is used as one form of tour support. We recently loaned it to You Am I, and it was returned to the ARRCo HQ unharmed. Then it needed to be in Austin for the Gloria Record tour, so Greg bought some beef jerky and Immodium and hit the road.

Tell us about the Arena Rock softball team. What's the mascot? How'd you fare last season? Who's going to be an unrestricted free agent next year?
We don't have a mascot, though we stole a giant rock that was being used as a doorjam at a local bar and wrote "Arena Rock" on it. It's still in the trunk of Greg's car. We made it to the playoffs this year with a .500 season. As far as free agents, we could never get rid of Newsie, the Hebrew Thunder or the Velvet Fog.

In 10 years Arena Rock will be ...
Like the Energizer Bunny.

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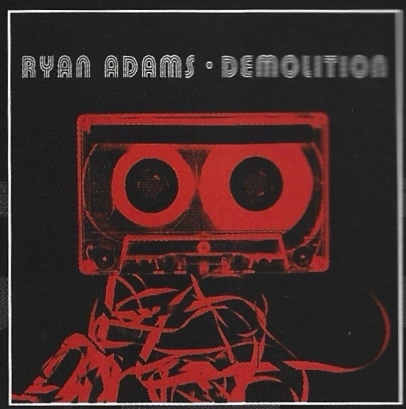
RYAN ADAMS
DEMOLITION



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REEL WORLD

"The Pocket" Sizes Up Go-Go Music

While attending Georgetown University in the late 1990s, Nicholas Shumaker was introduced to go-go, the bass-heavy, jam-happy, conga-and-timbale-driven variation of hip hop. He listened to Backyard Band, a noteworthy group from Washington, D.C. "I had no clue what it was," says Shumaker. "I thought it was antiquated rap stuff of the Grandmaster Flash era." Then he noticed the long list in Washington's *City Paper* of go-go bands playing every night in D.C. clubs. "I said to my friend, 'Let's go see Backyard Band one night,'" says Shumaker. "He said, 'White kids just don't go to those shows.' After I heard that, I kind of dismissed it."

While Shumaker never made it to a go-go show during college, the music stayed with him. His interest was renewed in 2001 while writing a freelance article on go-go. He discovered how much the music is intertwined with the inner-city culture of D.C., a live-music mecca dating back to Duke Ellington. "I started doing a lot of research," says Shumaker. "I realized it would be a disservice just to do an article on go-go."

Kids love go-go

The result is *The Pocket: The D.C. Go-Go Movement*, an insightful documentary directed by Shumaker and business partner Michael Cahill that explores the cultural significance of go-go through interviews and jubilant live footage from the scene's past and present. Things are put into perspective by members of current D.C. go-go bands as well as astute observers, including Chuck Brown ("the Godfather Of Go-Go"), poet/educator Thomas Sayers Ellis and Ian MacKaye (Fugazi shared bills with go-go bands in the '80s). In addition, the filmmakers visit an area not on the usual D.C. tourist map: the black neighborhoods where go-go has thrived in clubs for the last 25 years.

While Shumaker and Cahill trace the roots of go-go back to the mid-'60s when blue-eyed Tommy Vann and his band the Professionals scored a hit with "Soul Sister Annie," credit for spurring the scene and making it a uniquely D.C. phenomenon goes to Brown. An ex-con and former boxer, Brown laid the foundation in the early '70s for the infectious groove marked by percolating percussion patterns (drums, congas, cowbells), call-and-response chants and the let's-party-all-night relationship the bandleader has with the audience. From early on, Brown—who's been known to stretch out one song over the course of an hour—aimed to keep his audiences dancing throughout a performance, sustaining the groove between tracks with percussion breakdowns. (Aficionados often call the beat "the pocket.")

Through the years, go-go influenced Bootsy Collins, Will Smith and George Clinton, but the style never achieved mainstream success. Brown's Soul Searchers flirted with national notoriety in 1979 with *Bustin' Loose*, the definitive go-go record. E.U. topped the R&B singles chart in 1988 with "Da Butt," a watered-down go-go song from the soundtrack to Spike Lee's *School Daze*.

The best chance for exposure came in 1985 when Island Records founder Chris Blackwell vowed to take go-go global, much the way he had done with reggae. Several go-go bands were signed to lucrative contracts. Island Pictures even rolled out the film *Good To Go*, which aspired to do for go-go what 1972's *The Harder They Come* did for reggae and Jimmy Cliff. (In the latter film, Cliff's character, a troubled wannabe reggae artist, rises to popularity on the strength of his police record.) Unfortunately, *Good To Go* turned into a turgid drama about corruption and racism in D.C. that starred—perhaps the first indication of impending disaster—Art Garfunkel. The gratuitously brutal film depicted gang rape and murder, and the music scene was relegated to the background. Go-go became a "soundtrack for sadism," opined a reviewer for the *City Paper*. The film, released in 1986, was savaged by critics and grossed a pitiful $220,000. (It was retitled *Short Fuse* for video.)

Despite good intentions, the Island team never figured out how to successfully record, produce or market go-go to the masses or capture the raw, spontaneous vibe that made it so appealing to the music's followers. None of this surprises Shumaker, who believes go-go isn't ready for mass consumption. "The songs go on for so long, fitting into the current paradigm of mainstream music would be difficult," he says.

"I believe that everything has its time," says Kato Hammond, operator of a go-go resource magazine and Web site (www.tmottgogo.com). "Go-go can and will jump to the next level when the people who really know what go-go is and understand how to market it ... [But for now], go-go belongs to D.C., and it's a hell of a party."

—John Elsasser

REQUIRED READING

IN PRINT

Byrds, Beatles And Bonghits

What's that old adage? "If you can remember the '60s, you weren't really there"? Flashback time, kids, and by the way, don't lick those postage stamps. They're not for mailing bills.

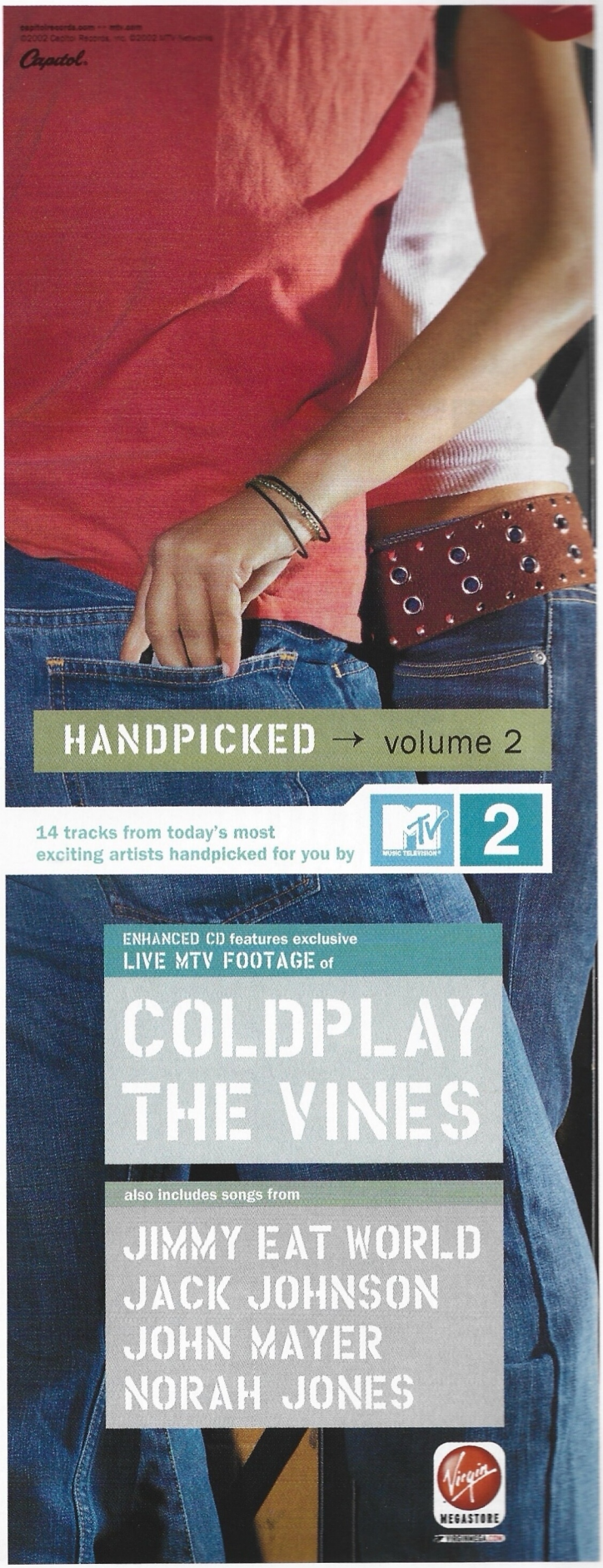
The Initial Buzz: *Turn! Turn! Turn!: The '60s Folk-Rock Revolution* (Backbeat) by Richie Unterberger is a compelling, exhaustive study of the jangly folk-rock idiom's roots and trajectory. The decade's social fabric and counterculture are part of the story, of course; as young people turned on, tuned in and, yes, occasionally dropped out, they transformed an older, traditional artform—folk, with elements of blues, country and bluegrass—into something relevant to their lives. The revolution wasn't simply Dylan plugging in at Newport or the Byrds' adaptation of "Turn! Turn! Turn!" or the Mamas & Papas' seductive "California Dreamin'" siren-call. Unterberger spins his tale from scores of firsthand interviews with the principals (Donovan, Roger McGuinn, Judy Collins, John Sebastian) as well those behind the scenes (Dylan documentarian D.A. Pennebaker, Byrds publicist Billy James, Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman), and his book's incisive, you-are-there tone belies the above-quoted adage in spades. Stop press—there's a part two en route.

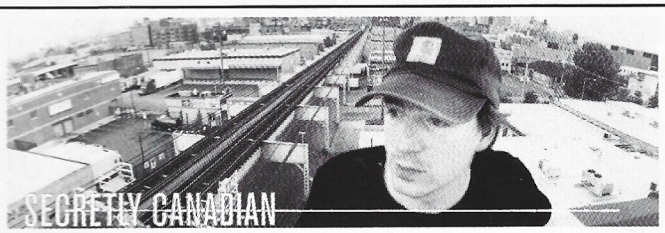
The Trip: *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock And Psychedelics In The 1960s* (University Of Chicago Press) by Nick Bromell is a slim-yet-persuasive look at, as journalist David Farber puts it, "why the music mattered and what dope was for, and how young people dreamed of breaking out of isolation." Bromell, an associate professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, acknowledges from the outset that memories of the '60s are forever viewed through rose-colored (and frequently acid-dipped) glasses. His book is no casual tome, either; a passing knowledge of sociology and media won't hurt the reader. Nor will some firsthand experience with, ah, Mother Nature's chemical gifts. "Thirty years ago it was as if rock had tapped into a wellspring where Being gushed forth in a play of light and sound that was free and unnamed and not yet frozen into the forms that history and culture demand," writes Bromell. Clearly, his intent is to thaw out some of the memories in order that we can relearn these lessons that may have been left behind in the haze.

The Comedown: *Those Were The Days: An Unofficial History Of The Beatles Apple Organization 1967-2002* (Cherry Red) by Stefan Granados charts the tangled financial tale of Apple Records with oftentimes lip-smacking glee (the amount of money the Beatles blew on fly-by-night schemes or handed over to hucksters was astounding, and yes, financial advisor Allen Klein really was a prick). Not to mention that Granados' research uncovers plenty of info previous Beatles-related works either glossed over or missed entirely. Idealism, egos and a ton of cash fueled the first high-profile artist-run label, and the story is definitely relevant to today's indie scene. Granados also puts a human face to those frequently caught in the eye of the Fab Four storm, such as Badfinger, James Taylor and John Lennon's hapless backing group Elephant's Memory. Recall, of course, that the Beatles' final album was issued by Apple in May 1970: Even though the label lingered and kept its doors open for some years to come, for many, the release of *Let It Be* marked the closing of the '60s shutters for good. Those were the days, indeed.

—Fred Mills

[Backbeat, www.backbeatbooks.com; Cherry Red, www.cherryred.co.uk; University Of Chicago Press, www.press.uchicago.edu]





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SWEARING AT MOTORISTS THIS FLAG SIGNALS GOODBYE CD/LP
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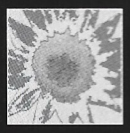

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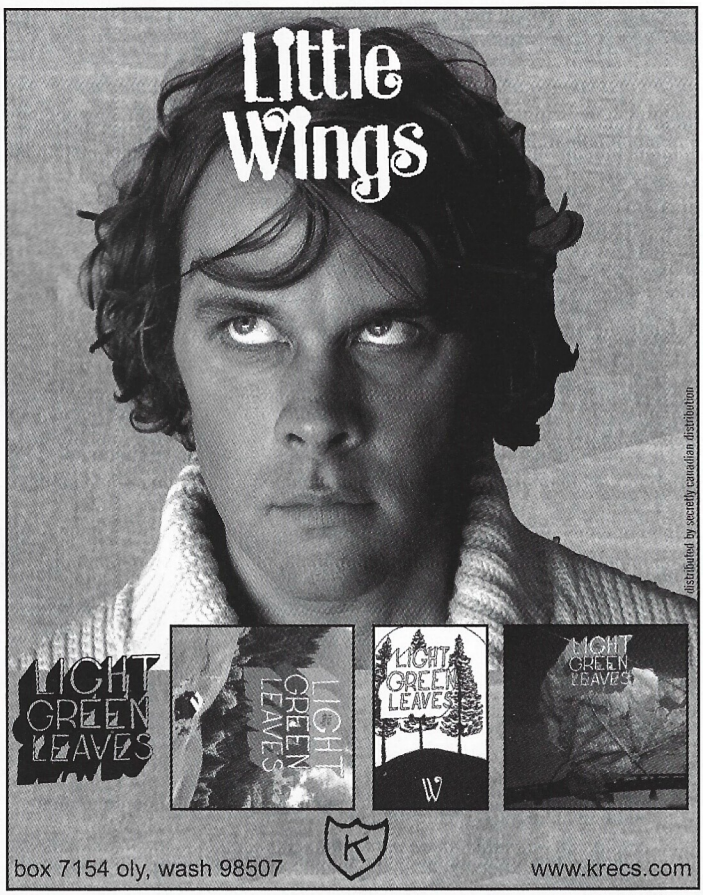

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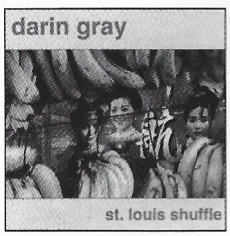

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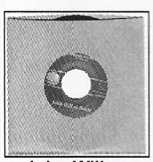
St. Louis Shuffle

Unstable Ensemble
The Liturgy of Ghosts



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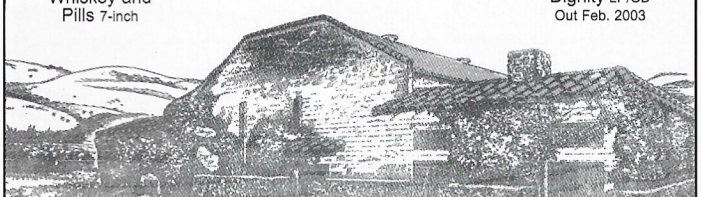

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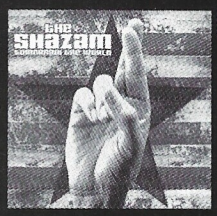

THE SHAZAM - TOMORROW THE WORLD

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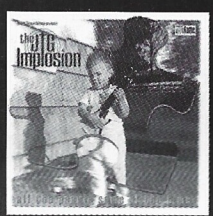
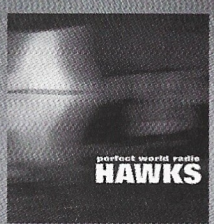


THE JTG IMPLOSION - ALL OF THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME

Stunning solo outing from ex-member of Star Collector, Joe Giddings! Fans of lusciously layered and tasty vocals, listen up. Think Jellyfish, Queen and Pilot, highly textured guitars and supreme poptopia! A melodic and smoldering feast of bobble-head riffs and 'la-la-la' choruses and imaginative arrangements that fans of Jellyfish will recognize as bittersweet territory.

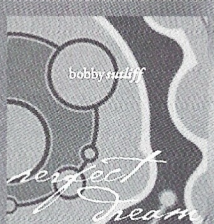
THE DEAL - GOODBYE SEPTEMBER

Sadly, a band even the most passionate power pop fan has not heard--until now. Not Lame Archives unearths a band that fans of classic Raspberries strongly dosed up with Shoes, The Producers, Hawks and Fools Face have to hear. Material is from the early-mid 80's. This 15 track collection of demos and lost studio trax is one made of a sugar pop fans' dreams.



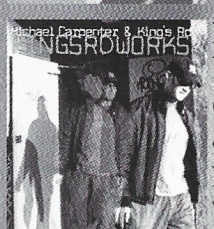
HAWKS - PERFECT WORLD RADIO

A Not Lame Archives release! Hawks released two excellent power pop albums in 1980 and 1982 on Columbia. This is a 16 song collection of songs that essentially represent an unreleased 3rd album, plus a handful of demos of some of their classic songs to round it all out! The full studio demos of classic material includes: "It's All Right, It's Okay", "Right Away" and "Need Your Love".



BOBBY SUTLIFF - PERFECT DREAM

Amazing new solo album from this ex-Windbreaker and it's a classic! Imagine Television(the band) playing with Mitch Easter and The Byrds. Beautiful, rich textures wash over each listen and the gentle jangles, yearning vocals and dream-like music-scapes. Stunning and elegiac jangle heaven.



MICHAEL CARPENTER - KINGS ROAD

Due February 2003! Carpenter takes the next step into being regarded as one of the music landscape's most significant talents. Driving home some of his most accomplished and mature songs yet, "Kings Road" is written from the soul and potently delivers heavenly vocal harmonies and his special brand of guitar jangle with confident ease.

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EVERYDAY AND THEN SOME

FUZZBUBBLE
DEMOS, OUT-TAKES AND RARITIES

THE GENERAL STORE
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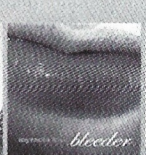
THE DONS
DAWN OF THE DONS



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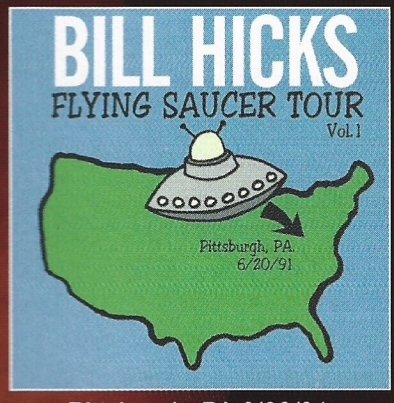

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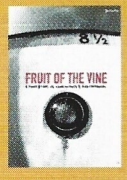

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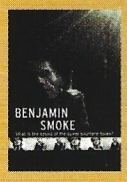

003 **BENJAMIN SMOKE**
by Jem Cohen & Peter Sillen
Award-winning documentary about the life and death of underground southern blues/punk legend Benjamin. Includes new short films of tribute songs performed by Cat Power and Vic Chesnutt, extra footage and additional interviews. "A film as ethereal, moving and uncompromising as its subject." – *Village Voice*

COMING SOON...
Style Wars by Tony Silver & Henry Chalfant, **I Am Trying to Break Your Heart** : A Film about Wilco by Sam Jones, **Hell House** by George Ratliff, and **Friends Forever** by Ben Wolfinsohn, **Mysterious Object at Noon** by Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

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2002 THE YEAR IN MUSIC

WE'VE GOT OUR FINGER ON THE PULSE OF AMERICA. WE'VE GOT OUR FOOT IN THE ASS OF 12 MONTHS OF MUSIC. SAY HELLO AS MAGNET WAVES GOODBYE TO 2002.

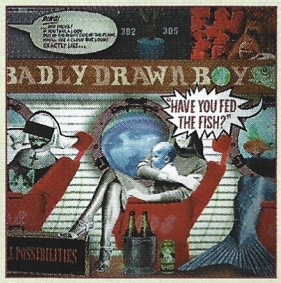
ESSENTIAL LIST

...TRAIL OF DEAD
Source Tags & Codes (Interscope)

In a year when most rock combos stripped down to their skivvies for the sake of bare essentials, this Texas quartet piled on layers of guitars as if it were planning to hibernate for a decade. *Source Tags & Codes* is the animalistic fever-dream that follows a more-is-more season of gathering noisy influences (Sonic Youth, Butthole Surfers), veering from knives-out vocal assaults and vicious guitar stabs to packed-in-ice explorations of delicate sound.

ANNIVERSARY
Your Majesty (Vagrant)

Crawling out of the skinny-tie skin and new-wave shell of its synth-heavy 2000 debut, the Anniversary has mutated into something epic, fantastic and possibly altogether different. *Your Majesty* sprouts Pink Floyd fins and Emerson Lake & Palmer gills instead of Cars webbed feet. In some sci-fi rendering of musical history, these Kansans will be remembered as the benevolent time travelers who taught space-age indie kids to make peace with prog-rock dinosaurs.

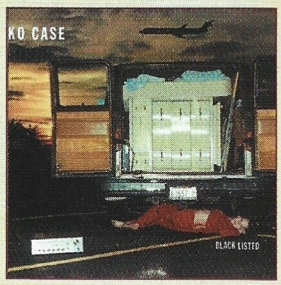


BADLY DRAWN BOY Have You Fed The Fish? (ARTISTdirect)

Badly Drawn Boy or broken-down man? Sure, following the cut/sample/paste gold rush, Beck may have found his very own Leonard Cohen afterworld, but in 2002, the sad-troubadour crown—now looking suspiciously like a knit cap—best fit the head of Damon Gough. With his heart stitched to his sleeve, Gough rewinds through the last three decades of pop to find a place where mariachi bands rage with British headbangers and everyone smiles through the pain.

BECK
Sea Change (DGC/Geffen)

Unlike anything he's ever made, *Sea Change* isn't just touched by the spirit of the '70s; it holds in its bones all the genuine loneliness that loomed within the hedonism of the time. Buoyed by sad-eyed breakups, Beck deploys these melancholy depth charges with Nick Drake-like, death-angel lyricism and the sort of acoustic soul (a post-psychedelic, brushed-denim British C&W) Elton John made famous before he found camp. Devastating stuff this rocky *Sea* is.

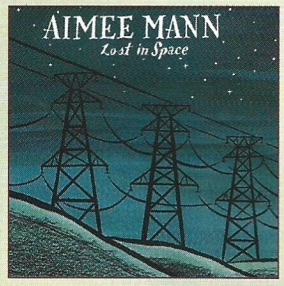


NEKO CASE
Blacklisted (Bloodshot)

After recording her third and finest album, Case went on tour with Nick Cave. Judging from the sexy, anesthetized, 3-a.m. vibe seeping through these tracks, she's been a bit of a Bad Seed all along. Take the title for what you will—blacklisted in love, in life or from the Grand Ole Opry stage—but the oppositional attitude it connotes (discarding alt-country, goin'-nowhere relationships, her undergarments four drinks into any given show, etc.) is unmistakable.

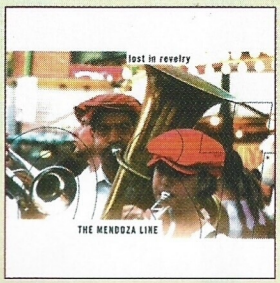
DAMIEN JURADO
I Break Chairs (Sub Pop)

Forget chairs; these songs will break your heart. Spiritual folkie Jurado has corralled his own Crazy Horse in Gathered In Song, a raw, rocking combo that provides the necessary muscle for a dozen tales of jealousy, self-destruction, mermaids and air-show disasters. On the Uncle Tupelo-with-synth "The Way You Look," Jurado matter-of-factly declares, "It's just the way that it is/I wanna be you." You suspect the feeling is mutual for songwriters everywhere.



AIMEE MANN
Lost In Space (SuperEgo)

A cold compress for wrecked lives and broken-glass psyches, *Lost In Space* sounds warm but feels chilly as it navigates tales of neurotic codependents screwed sideways by love and drugs. Mann's characters lean on each other, and sometimes they fall over. The album's McCartney-esque melodies and soft-rock accompaniment may initially feel like assault with a blunt object, but Mann's steady, passionless voice idly lulls you to sleep or death.

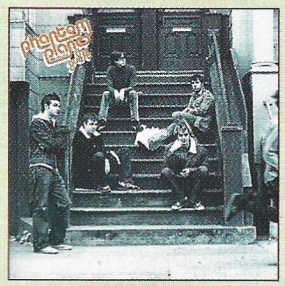


MENDOZA LINE
Lost In Revelry (Misra)

A Brooklyn bar-scene mope opera whose lyrics were surely scribbled across several stacks of cocktail napkins, *Lost In Revelry* is one part spilled milk and one part guzzled whiskey, garnished with bitter sprigs of semi-precious indie twang. Like a drunken Belle And Sebastian or an underachieving Fleetwood Mac, the Mendoza Line's boy/girl/boy songwriting trio undercuts its sullen pop with venom, zinging cheating lovers at last call: "It *will* be the same without you."

PEDRO THE LION
Control (Jade Tree)

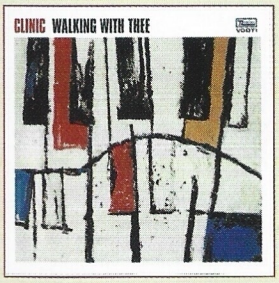
David Bazan is angry, sad and cynical about the way things are turning out. The Earth is charring in a politically devised convection oven, love is only a prelude to infidelity and Jesus just isn't coming back for us fast enough. Fortunately, Bazan is a genius at allegory; he packs his discontent into keenly chiseled lyrics dense as granite, resting his own restrained vocals on the fault lines of rock songs that rarely quake with rage but always want to.



PHANTOM PLANET
The Guest (Epic)

You were expecting Dogstar? Few predicted this post-millennial brat pack's second album would do much more than wax tiresome on Sunset Strip ennui. But the bright pop songs on *The Guest* sound like they're being pumped in from the unreal suburban set of a '60s TV sitcom: carefree, spotless, in full color. A cynic might cringe upon hearing Alex Greenwald croon, "The whole world needs an anthem," but right-hearted listeners should follow his lead to join the chorus.

ENING THE 20 BEST ALBUMS OF 2002

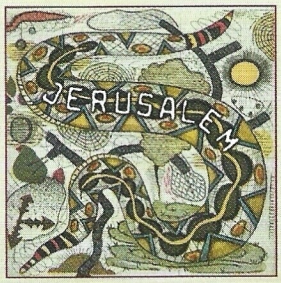


CLINIC
Walking With Thee (Domino)

What the hell is that sound? The bizarro-world melodica tone that suggests a basket of vipers waiting to be charmed. What *is* that? Clinic's limbo funhouse throbs with it. The speakers bleed distortion, the organ conjures the undead and a gallery of wax figures mumbles and spits along with the *danse macabre*—but that ghostwind sound governs the seance. Finally summoned is "For The Wars," a waltz as gentle, elliptical and haunting as a music box's song.

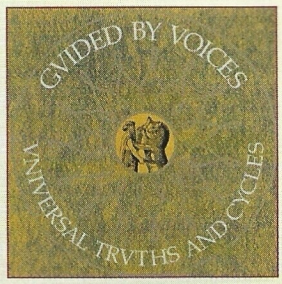
CORNELIUS
Point (Matador)

Keigo Oyamada squeezes the juices from techno, Tropicalia, cartoon metal and no wave and leaves a curious pop pulp. No mere musical trash collector or point-and-shoot tourist sampling souvenir genres, he has discovered an ability to transform trends into an addictive confection of distinct sound-hunks best swallowed whole. Trading debut schizophrenia for sophomore focus, *Point* woos ears into the revelry of a clever fete and dances barefoot on top of its borrowings.



STEVE EARLE
Jerusalem (E-Squared/Artemis)

A political album is risky; a conceptual one, fraught with conceit. Marry the two and you've got a potential disaster on the order of America's foreign policy. Not so on Earle's metaphorical journey to our own heart of darkness. Amid Stonesy crunch, border-radio raunch and down-from-the-mountain twang, there's a napalm-scorched sadness here impossible to cloak. The truth sometimes hurts; nobody warned us it would make us weep.



GUIDED BY VOICES Universal Truths And Cycles (Matador)

Newly unencumbered by outside producers and private-life dramas, Robert Pollard reverts to what he knows best: bending genres to his archivist's will, lager in one hand, twirling mic cord in the other. From bursts of Who-styled fury and prog-etched psych to Anglophilic pop and feeling-groovy jangle, *Universal Truths* isn't so much an indiecentric comeback as a welcome case of—to paraphrase Pollard's hero Pete Townshend—meet the new GBV, same as the old GBV.

INTERPOL Turn On The Bright Lights (Matador)

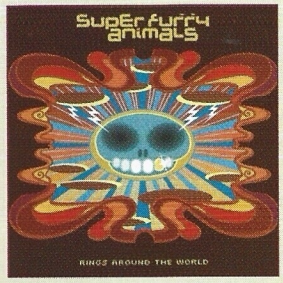
Bleak, severe and relentlessly tense, Interpol's gloomy, interlocking post-punk guitars offer the frenzied paranoia of Kafka with none of the comic release. *Turn On The Bright Lights*' prettiest moments hinge on unnerving imagery: self-mutilation, pornographic subways, a drowning girl and a roomful of couches. Grim as the reaper and mysterious as the Stygian boatman, Interpol is waiting in the mist to take you on that final ferry ride to the other side.

PROMISE RING
Wood/Water (Anti-)

The Promise Ring's decision to say goodbye for good (hey, hey, hey) to all things emo evoked puzzled responses from fans of its more rollicking early days. But those willing to stick around for the autumn of the band's adolescence found broad-shouldered pop, English elocution (courtesy of producer Stephen Street) and the charm of a cracked vocal melody. *Wood/Water* removed the Promise Ring from the emo ghetto it helped spawn. From Milwaukee to Manchester.

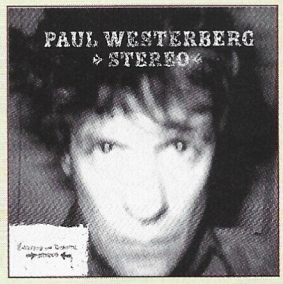
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Songs For The Deaf (Interscope)

The devil's dance that is the Queens' third LP plays like loud rock circa 2002's answer to the immortal *Who's Next*. Marshall-driven mule-kicks, airtight shuffles, desert blues and murky garage are threaded together by the banter of imaginary Southern California DJs and whupped upside the head by the Godzilla-sized drumming of Dave Grohl. And let's not forget the Camels-ravaged rasp of Mark Lanegan appearing like a mirage. Totally awesome.



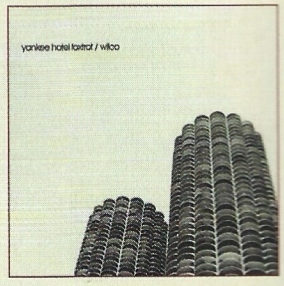
SUPER FURRY ANIMALS Rings Around The World (Beggars Banquet)

A big, breathtaking supernova of sound, *Rings Around The World* is the sonic approximation of Technicolor. In fact, it's such a full-on sensory rush that it's difficult to absorb all at once: Strings soar, guitars dive, harmonies hover, vocals get mangled by tape loops and effects pedals. But beneath the layers of tie-dye topcoat are fully ripened songs, fat with sugar and dripping with juice. SFA has been sowing its psych-pop seeds for six years. *Rings* is the perfect fruit.



PAUL WESTERBERG
Stereo/Mono (Vagrant)

Westerberg was once a rumpled, sodden mess of a rock 'n' roll singer who wedged the occasional slice of exquisite confusion into the Replacements' steady diet of chaos and martyrdom. Then he lost the plot. In a year otherwise noteworthy for bratty, recycled-guitar hoodwink, Westerberg returned with a pocketful of bitterness. Paired with dirty-trousered toxic twin *Mono* (included with *Stereo* but credited to wacky alter ego Grandpaboy), this is his best work in 15 years.

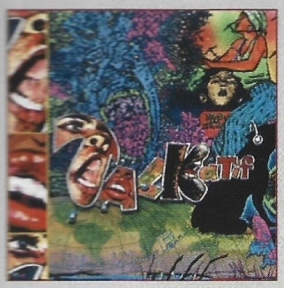


WILCO
Yankee Hotel Foxtrot (Nonesuch)

Two corncobs spike the Windy City sky on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*'s cover, epitomizing the ambition, spirit, creativity, modernism, wit, tradition and gravity of its architectural character. Chicago's landmarks were designed for the future, as sturdy as the weight-bearing walls of the Monadnock, as flashy as the towering Sears, as romantic as the wedding-cake Wrigley, as elegant and thoughtful as the many Meises and Wrights. This is the vernacular of Wilco 2002.

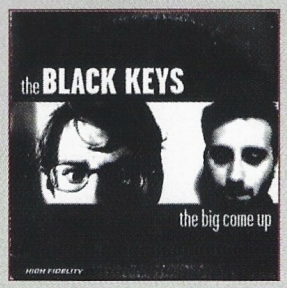
HIDDEN TREASURES

10 GREAT ALBUMS BURIED IN 2002



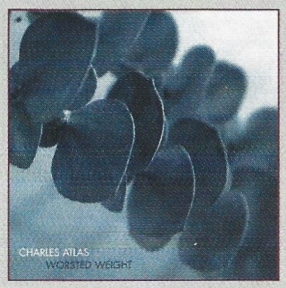
ANTIBALAS
Talkatif (Ninja Tune)

The 14 renegade funkateers in this afrobeat orchestra hijack George Clinton's Parliament mothership for an ethnodelic, polyrhythmic journey from the sweaty lofts of Brooklyn's funk/soul Daptone Records crew to the steamy jungles of Mama Africa. You want soul? Raw but silky-sweet delights herein. Funk? Horny horns never hornier, stanky grooves never stankier. Jazz? Right on. Roll over Dark Magus, and tell Fela Kuti the news. **[www.ninjatune.net]**



BLACK KEYS
The Big Come Up (Alive/Bomp!)

Vintage is everything for this Akron, Ohio, duo, from its stripped-down, *Exile On Main Street*-meets-Fat Possum Records sound to Dan Auerbach's asthmatic-field-worker soul shouts to the *faux*-aged sleeve artwork. As with blues-skronk revivalists Jon Spencer and the White Stripes, purists may scoff. But these grooves are as woozy and funky as a hungover drive from Memphis down to Clarksdale and deep into the Delta. **[www.alive-totalenergy.com]**

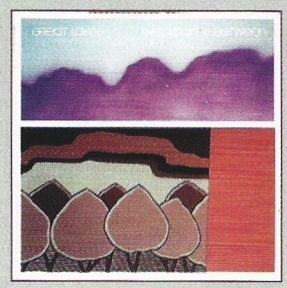


CHARLES ATLAS
Worsted Weight (Ochre)

Creeping fogs, ghost trains and ravens on fenceposts have nothing on the impending sense of cumulative dread this San Francisco trio summons with its spookyvision soundtracks. *Worsted Weight* plays out like the sequel to Air's creepy/beautiful score to *The Virgin Suicides* by using the ornate instrumental arsenal of a Mogwai or Godspeed to sneak up on the death scene without all the loud crescendos. Stalk it before it stalks you. **[www.ochre.co.uk]**

COMET GAIN
Réalistes (Kill Rock Stars)

London loiterer David Feck—a wayward romantic cut from Holden Caulfield/Max Fischer cloth—and his band of professional amateurs champion the young, meek and revolutionary, scrapping like the Jesus And Mary Chain in a catfight with the Shirelles or the Shaggs. All those other indie/punk bands you love for their passionate naivéte and individual politics are fucking Nazis in comparison. This album is your Rushmore. **[www.killrock-stars.com]**



GREAT LAKES The Distance Between (Orange Twin)

This threadbare-yet-noble surviving platoon of the Elephant 6 army can spew out a fuzz-laced garage assault hot enough to wilt the magnolia blossoms on your dinning-room table. But aside from crystalline Michael Nesmith and Zombies covers, what makes Great Lakes stand tall enough for a battlefield commission is a knack for fusing the Band's post-Civil War melancholy with Spiritualized's feats of ballroom levitation. **[www.orangetwin.com]**

MULL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Loss (XL/Beggars Banquet)

You know what's missing most from today's pop-rock landscape? Theme songs. Like the penultimate number on Mull Historical Society's debut. It's a ruthlessly catchy "come-one, come-all" call to melodic arms that makes "Hey hey, we're the Monkees" sound like a bloody dirge. The rest are stunning approximations of Phil Spector production and Aztec Camera tartan pop that leave most of the U.K. Class Of '02 sounding like shite in comparison. **[www.beggars.com]**

ARCHER PREWITT
Three (Thrill Jockey)

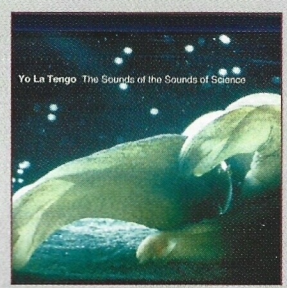
Metaphorically, Prewitt's third album is a graduate student on a half-tab of acid piloting a Volvo sedan, window cracked. It's the beginning of winter break. The AM radio is tuned to a baroque-pop block of Matthew Sweet, James Taylor, the Chamber Strings and the Left Banke. On the passenger seat is a textbook titled *Technology: Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow*. A small crystal hangs from the rearview mirror on a macramé string. **[www.thrilljockey.com]**

PUERTO MUERTO Your Bloated Corpse Has Washed Ashore! (Fire)

This husband-and-wife duo's concept album about pirates (of the swashbuckling variety—not those lame Internet or radio geeks) is a puffy shirt away from Renaissance Faire theatrical delusions. But these black-humored troubadour tales unearth glittering musical alloys—Bulgarian and Catalan folk, German and Italian opera, lullabies and shanteys—instead of cheap eyepatch jokes. Beware: sad harlots, cheap rum, broken-hearted bucs. **[www.firerecords.com]**

VELVET TEEN Out Of The Fierce Parade (Slowdance)

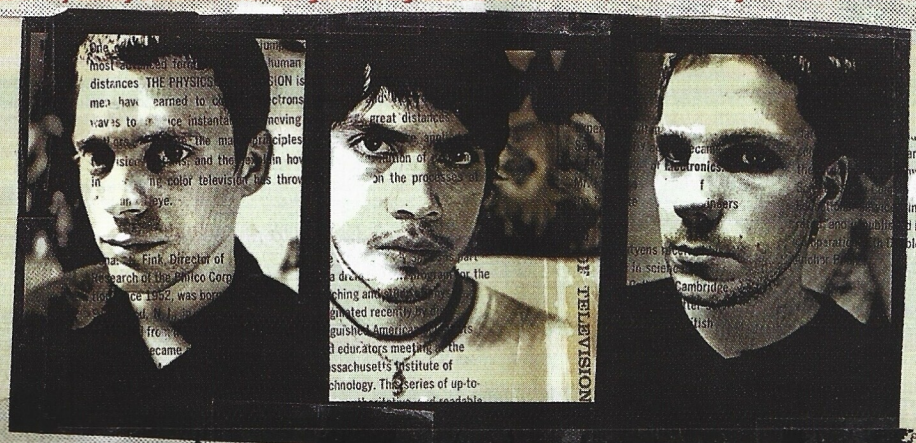
If only he sang higher, maybe then you would have noticed. Then again, maybe not. After all, the golden-throated peaks on this California trio's second album sound better on the down-low, mining subtle post-punk moments with Jeff Buckley *Grace*. But it's the voice that belongs to 21-year-old Judah Nagler that just won't go unnoticed, soaring and shining like a suburban homesick alien signaling to the folks back home. **[www.slowdance.com]**



YO LA TENGO The Sounds Of The Sounds Of Science (Egon)

Finally, a soundtrack for lonely marine biologists and record-store clerks sneaking into the science museum and camping out in a pup tent overnight. (They like each other, but they're just friends.) Recorded for a series of short films on sea creatures, *The Sounds Of Science* is a murky symphony of reverbed guitar gurgles, murmured, funky drumming and refracted keyboard melodies. Leave the Walkman, take the deep-sea diving helmet. **[www.yolatengo.com]**

"Blending the pillowy noise of My Bloody Valentine with the guttural digressions of Nick Cave, Calla is leading the race for the title of the American Radiohead."
- GEAR



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ROCK IS CRACKED

AND YOU WILL KNOW IT BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD JUNKIES, STALE TREND-CRUMBS, CORPORATE LIES, MEDIA CHEATS AND OTHER STOLEN REASONS TO LIVE.

BY FRED MILLS

Good evening, ladies and germs. Boy, what a crazy year 2002 was in the music world, huh? How crazy was it? Glad you asked.

Crazy enough that one of the year's most cynical albums, Tom Petty's *The Last DJ*, was also one of the most sentimental. Crazy enough that one of the darkest, Steve Earle's *Jerusalem*, turned out to be one of the most optimistic. Crazy enough that one of the most serious, Beck's *Sea Change*, was simultaneously one of the funniest, albeit unintentionally so. (Dude, get a grip—like, love hurts, OK?)

It was such a bizarre year that it seemed as if Father Time forgot to include the annual instruction manual. I mean, really, it would've been nice to make some plans. Maybe get a head start on rock's return, since that was apparently going to be such a big deal. You know, get a shag haircut, buy some leather trousers, begin a heroin habit or something.

Didn't happen, though. Twelve months ago, music critics consulting their trusty Magic 8 Balls probably encountered nothing but cloudy haze, dial-up-connection static and a recurring message in the view window that read "Try Again Later." Or maybe simply—to paraphrase the title of comedian David Cross' recent album—"Quit Asking, You Fucking Baby!"

ROCK IS BACK (OR MAYBE IT WAS JUST SLEEPING)

Enough already: It's back, for chrissake. In truth, if the New Rock Authenticity (my term; please attribute if you use it) has arrived and is ready to kick the asses of all the bourgeoisie boy bands, numskull nü-metalers and harried hip-hoppers who've been clogging the airwaves, that's a good thing. I'll take Howlin' Pelle over Hoppin' Munky (or whatever that dude from Korn's name is) any day.

But let me just ask you this simple question, gentle reader: What the hell kind of music do you think bands recording for labels like In The Red, Estrus, Get Hip, Norton, Fall Of Rome, Sympathy For The Record Industry, Bomp! and Dionysus have been making for, oh, the past decade or so? A related question might be: Can the Hentchmen, Greenhornes, Cynics, Gore Gore Girls and Sights of the world hitch a ride to the rock-is-back wagon in time to earn an honest wage before your attention wanders back to the next American Idol?

GOING OUT WITH A BANG

Along with rock itself, rock deaths made a comeback. Part of this was due to basic matters of age and attrition, but some of the high-profile demises were borne of pure self-abuse and lunacy. The Who's John Entwistle expired in a Vegas hotel room after an alleged evening of hookers and blow. Alice In Chains vocalist Layne Staley and Ramones bassist Dee Dee Ramone joined the choir invisible at ages 34 and 50, respectively, after indulging in too much chemical fun.

All the usual media suspects trotted out all the usual hand-wringing clichés: immensely talented musicians, loved by fans and friends, crippled by psychic pain, blah-blah-blah. Implicit amid all the obit apologia was that here were lives worth measuring—which is why, one supposes, you never read anything about some homeless street junkie, just the celeb ones. But spare me the memorials. When some so-called tortured artist holes up in a room and lines up that last hot shot, he instantly surrenders his privilege to be remembered in anything other than strict clinical terms. He's just another dead fucking junkie, one who, out of pure egomania and selfishness, betrayed the hopes and ideals of those who allowed him to be judged an "artist" in the first place: the fans.

HOPE I SELL OUT BEFORE I RETIRE

In 2002, it seemed everything was for sale, from personal dignity (hello, Ozzy Nicole Smith) to Pete Townshend's back catalog. We won't meditate unduly on whether Ol' Behind Blue Eyes should or shouldn't license Who songs to every Tom, Dick, Harry, auto manufacturer and prime-time television drama. (Nor shall we question Townshend's motives, financial or otherwise, in deciding to carry on as the Who before they'd finished zipping up the bassist's body bag.) Besides, a million Moby songs used in commercials and films can't be wrong. Artists should be able to make a living from their artistry, after all. Why can't the Clash shill for Jaguar if it will pay for an extra set or two of guitar strings?

That said, we'll turn the mic over to Tom Waits, who wrote, in an October letter to *The Nation*, "Songs carry emotional information and some transport us back to a poignant time, place or event in our lives. It's no wonder a corporation would want to hitch a ride on the spell these songs cast and encourage you to buy soft drinks, underwear or automobiles while you're in the trance. Artists who take money for ads poison and pervert their songs. It reduces them to the level of a jingle, a word that describes the sound of change in your pocket, which is what your songs become. Remember, when you sell your songs for commercials, you are selling your audience as well. When I was a kid, if I saw an artist I admired doing a commercial, I'd think, 'Too bad, he must really need the money.' But now it's so pervasive. It's a virus. Artists are lining up to do ads. The money and exposure are too tantalizing for most artists to decline. Corporations are hoping to hijack a culture's memories for their product."

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN (AND BETTER)

Maybe American record companies have woken up to the fact there's gold in them there archives, or perhaps it's simply that CD-remastering technology has finally caught up with the desires of rabid music fans to own everything on disc. There was a lot of griping in 2002 about how most new releases, not to put too fine a point on it, sucked. So a bumper crop of reissues frequently overshadowed the contemporary waxings of those artists being reissued.

As good as the Flaming Lips' *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots* was, the comprehensive anthologizing of the group's pre-major-label output—*Finally The Punk Rockers Are Taking Acid* and *The Day They Shot A Hole In The Jesus Egg*—made for a far heavier (literally—five bonus-material-crammed discs' worth) listening session. Similarly, while critics fawned all over Paul Westerberg's return to form via *Stereo/Mono*, all it took was the first four Replacements records—in particular 1984's *Let It Be*, perennially judged to be one of the greatest rock records of all time—reappearing in the bins to make people realize how far Saint Paul had really fallen. One-time "voice of a British generation" Paul Weller also submitted a critical fave with *Illumination* (out in the U.S. in January), but upon revisiting much of his back catalog via *The Jam At The BBC*, even the most tin-eared among us had to admit that, well, the Pauls have much in common. David Bowie's *Heathen* had some fine moments—actually, the best was a Moby remix on the bonus disc included with the limited-edition version—but really, what is there to say about Bowie '02 other than "expanded/remastered *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*"? And just a little tip: Lou Reed's new *The Raven* may be getting the hype treatment, but all you need to know about Reed are 1972's sublime *Transformer* and 1978's brutal *Live Take No Prisoners*.

both recently revived, remodeled and remastered for your listening edification.

BURNING FOR YOU

Remember the anti-piracy music-biz slogan from the '80s, "Home Taping Is Killing Music"? It held currency until everyone figured out the people most likely to make cassette copies of their LPs or compile mix tapes were also the most devoted album buyers. Record labels haven't learned from the past, and their latest bogeymen are CD burners and Internet file-swapping. By treating music fans like criminals while ratcheting up record prices and hatching such user-unfriendly schemes as "crippled" copy-protected discs that won't play on computers, the industry has created a deeply adversarial relationship.

In a recent editorial penned for *CMJ New Music Report*, Jim Kelly, vice president of sales at V2 Records, discussed the snowball effect of file-sharing and CD burning. After a somewhat facile discussion of how commerce and art are interrelated, he summarized with this statement: "People with families are suffering because of your greed." While this leap of logic and outright major-label propaganda is worth analyzing, we'll cut to the chase: Artists and their kids aren't starving because Joe Fratboy is out there utilizing this year's version of Napster. It's because the music industry bases its moves on unlimited profit, not artist development; unfortunately, artists not privy to multi-million-dollar recording contracts are the first ones to feel the heat when unreasonable sales projections aren't met.

True, record sales are way down. But genuine music lovers will always seek out new tunes and new artists; that's how we get our fixes. In general, people behave honestly as long as they feel they're getting a fair shake. It's just that the aforementioned adversarial relationship is so teeth-baring, a lot of damage control on the part of the labels is clearly in order.

Singer/songwriter Janis Ian penned a lengthy essay on music-biz matters in the June issue of *Performing Songwriter*, and after it subsequently spread like wildfire across the Internet, she posted an even more incisive follow-up piece on her Web site: "Do I believe downloading is not harming the music industry? Yes, absolutely. Do I think consumers, once the industry starts making product they want to buy, will still buy even though they can download? Yes. Water is free, but a lot of us drink bottled water because it tastes better. You can get coffee at the office, but you're likely to go to Starbucks or the local espresso place, because it tastes better. When record companies start making CDs that offer consumers a reason to buy them, we will buy them. The songs may be free online, but the CDs will taste better."

PAY TO PLAY, VERSION 6.0

Even album reviews have a price tag. In an apparent move to obviate one of the basic tenets of responsible journalism—that advertising and editorial departments should remain separate—a heretofore obscure music Web site, www.nyrock.com, set off a firestorm on music-related newsgroups in 2002 when it made public its policy regarding coverage of releases by indie bands and labels: "We have a $20 CD-review policy for all submissions from unsigned and independent-label bands. If you'd like the CDs reviewed, please send payment." (Cough up an additional $10 and your photo can run with the review.) Major-label releases, on the other hand, are reviewed free of charge.

While NY Rock declined to answer any of MAGNET's questions regarding this policy, through examination of the site's defensively worded explanation (which was subsequently circulated via bulk e-mail), we gleaned the following—heavily paraphrased—info: Advertising revenue, good; NY Rock's lack of advertising revenue, bad. We feature cool mainstream acts like Tori Amos **(continued on page 121)**

JOHN RITTER

THE FACTORY TOUR

WHAT EXACTLY DID "24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE" AND FACTORY RECORDS JUST DO TO MY WARDROBE, ER, I MEAN, MY RECORD COLLECTION?

BY ANDREW EARLES

The gaping chasm left by Factory Records across today's landscape of musical tastemakers (and just plain old makers) follows the retro cycle's two-decade plan nicely. This is comforting, seeing as how the retro cycle, like the winter, is getting shorter and is therefore becoming more and more confusing. I'm not sure I'm ready to wake up and see the reemergence of anoraks and Soup Dragons T-shirts.

Factory hit an artistic peak around 1980 and the beginning of a commercial peak a few years later. So it seems proper we're experiencing the climactic reinterpretation of, at least, the pillars that supported Factory's first several years. Drinking liberally from the Joy Division trough, as we will discuss later, proved more advantageous to exciting guitar-rock bands in 2002 than ever before. Conversely, when speaking of the non-rock explosion—specifically the electro movement—New Order and early OMD figure heavily in Factory's historical iconology.

Factory was a label of fast sonic progression and, when viewed over its entire existence, no real signature sound. I buckle under shits and giggles at the usage of "the Factory sound" when describing a new band. So the group in question sounds like the first James seven-inch? Like New Order? A Certain Ratio? Cabaret Voltaire? The Durutti Column? If the subject sounds like the Railway Children, it should've thrown in the striped pocket-Ts yesterday. Just say Joy Division, because that's what you mean. Don't reference Crispy Ambulance as a wild-card obscurity, either; we won't be impressed. Besides, the accusations that Crispy Ambulance unrelentingly mimicked Ian Curtis and Co. were leveled for a reason.

Factory's first few years marked one of the only times that g-o-t-h-i-c didn't spell "stupid." Joy Division and early (read: good) efforts by Cabaret Voltaire and A Certain Ratio were frequently death-obsessed, cryptic and cold but have never shared one thematic strand with the new goth associated with giant pants, "offensive" T-shirts, modern primitivism or post-Marilyn Manson Florida teenagers.

Bringing my point to a reasonable head in 2002 was *24 Hour Party People*. Successful on so many levels because music movies have a propensity to fail on so many levels, this whipsmart film followed Factory and its founder—the smarmy but oddly lovable Tony Wilson—through a meteoric upslide and hilarious downfall at the hands of the gang of human garbage cans known as the Happy Mondays. As Wilson, famous Brit stand-up comedian Steve Coogan (this role might not have worked in the hands of anything but a stand-up comedian) addresses the camera, gets blowjobs in the backs of vans, scales Cocaine Mountain like a champ and somehow wins you over with his undeniable love for the music and non-plan that was his baby: the twin engines of excess that were Factory Records and its club, the proto-rave haven Haçienda.

The first half of the movie is an entertaining history lesson in Post-Punk 101: It begins with Wilson's epiphany after seeing the Sex Pistols perform and quickly leads to him stepping into the role of surrogate sugar daddy to the members of Joy Division. He carts them around the gloomy, trash-saturated Manchester and smirks at the world as the band is verbally abused by terrifying producer Martin Hannett during the recording of *Unknown Pleasures*. A Certain Ratio and the Durutti Column—or, rather, the actors playing them—are given anecdotal screen time as peripherals to the Joy Division (first) act; then—traumatic phone calls all around—everyone's world is sent into flux the minute Ian Curtis decided he didn't much care for what was airing on the television one afternoon. His suicide should've spelled disaster for Wilson and Factory, but as the quiet scene of Bernard Sumner strumming the chords to New Order's "Blue Monday" in a cavernous practice space indicates (and Coogan/Wilson barks into the camera): "This is act two."

New Order would be huge: Factory's answer to the Smiths, but, uh, huge. *24 Hour Party People*'s duality around Joy Division and the Happy Mondays has led many to question the conspicuous absence of New Order. Attribute this to the band's household-name status in the U.K., rendering its story old hat. Plus, New Order's tale doesn't include a suicide or a hellish degree of debauchery. Wilson was possessed by the idea that Factory had run on the fuel of three geniuses: Curtis (probably a genius), Hannett (insane, drunk, then genius) and the Mondays' Shaun Ryder (dumb as a potato, incredulous, colorful like a car accident). In truth, Factory got by on luck and the seat of its pants. And drugs.

Limiting a discussion of seminal post-punk and new-wave outfits to the Factory roster is unfair. Rough Trade and 4AD, for instance, have had a comparable impact on the better-than-average musical masses of today, but there wasn't a movie made about those labels, and I don't have space for 17,000 words. Something else those labels can't own up to is a scene- and sound-birthing club. As legendary British venues go, the Haçienda is in the running for a top slot. Factory was also stringently tasteful for a label that had no business plan whatsoever (it operated on handshake deals, and profits from million-selling 12-inches went toward the funding of a club). Every label-related item, tangible or not, had a catalog number, even the Haçienda housecat.

Bands such as Disco Inferno and GoGoGo Airheart were swinging by the Joy Division noose back when far fewer ears were being pricked, and I would venture that Joy Division was never posthumously uncool, irrelevant or overlooked. Enter Interpol. With an often-great 2002 album (*Turn On The Bright Lights*) and plenty of publicity, these calculated aesthetes have elevated Joy Division—if only in terms of influence on younger generations—to the heights of the Velvet Underground and Black Sabbath. MAGNET should offer a free subscription to anyone who can locate a magazine article about Interpol that doesn't mention Joy Division. (Perhaps you should check the *Cat Fancy* piece.) Liars, although doing wonders with a surfeit of non-Factory post-punk icons (Birthday Party and early Killing Joke, for example), still drink heavily from the Joy Division trough. The ghosts of A Certain Ratio can be heard in the rug-cutting grooves of !!!, Outhud and Radio 4. The Durutti Column can be held accountable for encouraging hordes of loners to combine "guitar" and "atmosphere," but I suppose that particular impact is five-to-10 years strong.

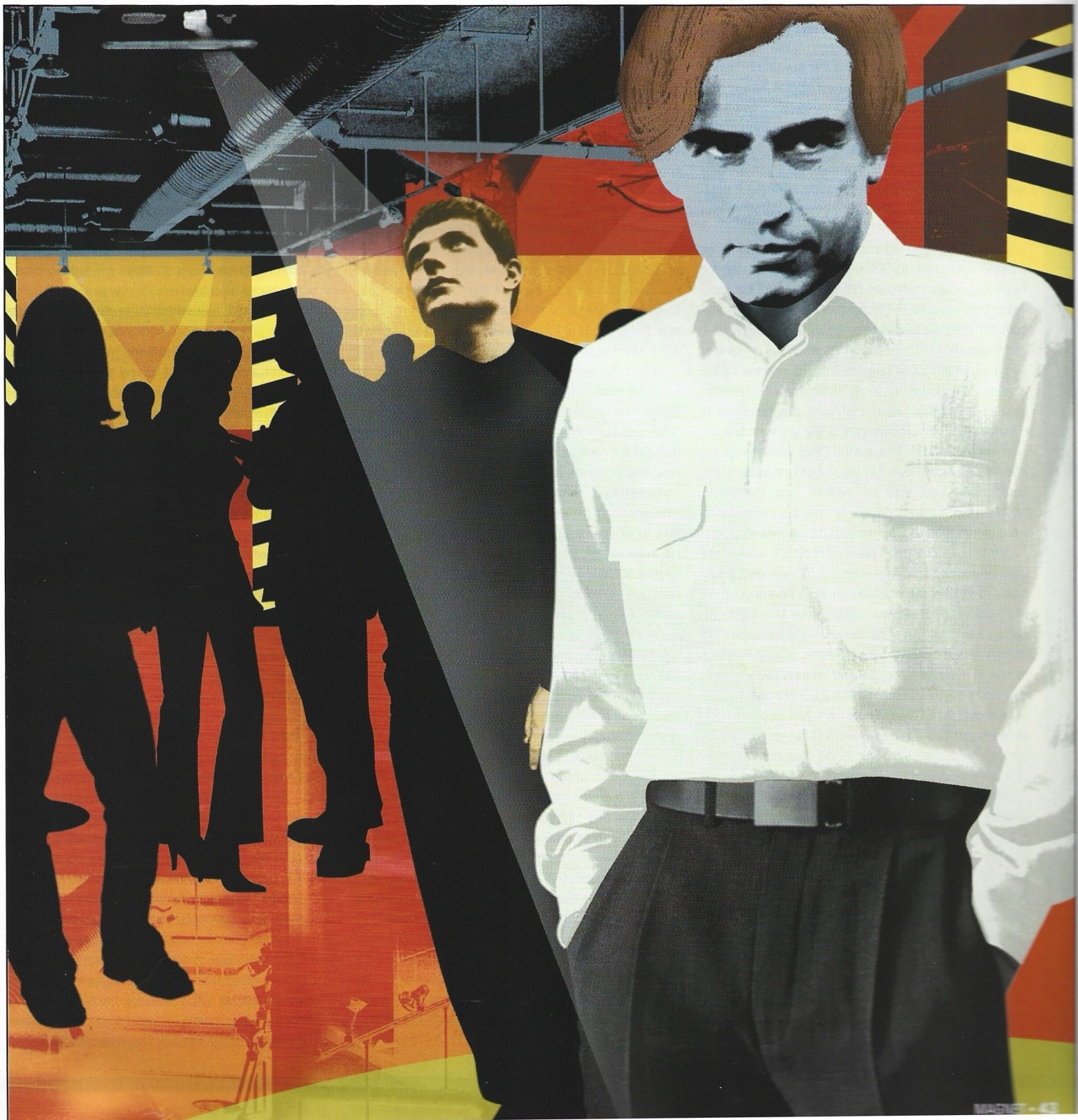
Granted, *24 Hour Party People* is named after a Happy Mondays song from 1986, but the phrase rings true when associated with the habits of today's hip music makers, music lovers and faceless scene wallpaper. We have entered yet another age of decadence. Take a well-attended show in a hot area of the country. Hear that incessant yammering? Well, that's none other than Cokie McSnort-Snort and his walnut nostrils—a tightly dressed scene fixture who, six years ago, would've scoffed at any behavior more hedonistic than "getting high before the show" (perhaps he/she knew a heroin addict or two). To filch an agreed sentiment from another writer (see page 46), this is undoubtedly a "party til you puke" era in which we live. Notice how popular dancing has become amongst the indie underground over the past several years? The British have always revered party culture within the context of all artistic social cliques. Rock, rave or drone, the U.K. takes pride in seeing the sun come up for all the wrong reasons.

New evidence of Factory's legacy is grumbling and pulsating into stores as I type. Crispy Ambulance recently toured behind 2002's *Scissorgun*. New Order, a band that might have more retrospective compilations than

proper albums, has been further immortalized by the admittedly interesting four-disc *Retro* and yet another best-of single CD, *International*. *Retro* is compiled by scene godheads from New Order's salad days. U.K. music journalists Miranda Sawyer and John McReady chose the material for the first two discs, which is where you'll find the rarities, b-sides and soundtrack flotsam. Disc three is the handiwork of Haçienda DJ Mike Pickering and focuses on remixes. Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie throws together live soundboard tracks spanning more than two decades for the last CD.

Lest we forget, A Certain Ratio was celebrated earlier in 2002 by the subtly directionless *Early* (a double album containing mostly Factory material but also clogged with tracks unworthy of exhumation). And in case you weren't sure of how much they sucked the first time around, the Railway Children reunited to record and unfortunately release *Reunion Wilderness*—a title that aptly describes what they see in front of them during their 1-p.m. festival slots.

Can I now regale you with a lengthy treatise on Factory's virtual creation of the rave movement? No? What about in 2004, when the Madchester sound is ravenously sinking its teeth into a topical rock scene?



JOHN RITTER

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

MAGNET PRESENTS A CASE STUDY ON THE STATE OF THE MUSIC BIZ: AN INDUSTRY HOPELESSLY ADDICTED TO THE PRESS GENERATED BY ITS PUBLICITY FOOT-SOLDIERS AND THE DESPERATE QUEST FOR ARTIFICIALLY STIMULATED DEMAND.

BY COREY DUBROWA

A year ago, MAGNET ran a story I wrote titled "Saving Private Ryan," which detailed Ryan Adams' career and the wave of hype surrounding his then-current release, *Gold*. The story was something of a mixed bag: Adams declined to be interviewed for it; his friends, foes and ex-bandmates weighed in as they saw fit; and the resulting piece sparked three issues' worth of letters to the editor about whether it was worthy of the space it occupied.

Regardless, 2002 will most likely go in the books as a Damn Good Year for Adams. He was nominated for three Grammys (although his album is still far from being certified gold, to the point of its subtle-as-a-jackhammer title). He toured relentlessly and found time—god knows how—to record a UPS truck full of demos, some of which were later fashioned into his latest release, the odds-'n'-sods collection *Demolition*. Despite the typical nature of such patchwork-quilt releases, it's a fine record containing some of Adams' best songs to date: The wistful "You Will Always Be The Same" and "Dear Chicago" both represent the quiet, reflective side of Adams first heard on Whiskeytown's classic "Avenues" and later turned into a full-blown tableau with his solo debut, *Heartbreaker*.

Fittingly, the MAGNET brain trust sought to bury the hatchet and see if Adams—despite his apparent anger about my earlier story, based on what several journalists said about their encounters with The Kid in its wake—would be willing to talk to us about his year, his thoughts on the state of the industry, what it was like to star in a Gap commercial and Winona Ryder's trial. You know, all the inside stuff rock stars like Adams care about these days. There was just one catch: In order to get to Adams, we were first required to go through his publicists. It was in this graveyard of ideas that our proposed story died a quick, silent death.

Earlier in the year, Adams had described his publicist to one journalist as "the best ... in the United States. She can't be fucked with; she does me and Shelby Lynne, Lucinda [Williams], as well as Jay Z." He then explained MAGNET's efforts to get him to participate in "Saving Private Ryan" were in vain: "When this guy (from MAGNET) called her, she said, 'There is no way you're gonna interview Ryan because I know exactly what you're gonna do. I have already gotten calls.'"

Never mind that this isn't anything like the conversation I had with Adams' handlers. The message was perfectly clear: If MAGNET refused to play the game by their rules, they would do their best to see to it that we didn't play at all. Undaunted, I charged ahead with an e-mail to the Lost Highway Records publicity team—this despite Adams' veiled threats following the publication of "Saving Private Ryan": "MAGNET is in a lot of trouble, especially from Universal Records (which owns Lost Highway), 'cause that guy and anybody from that magazine is never gonna get their records." Despite the dustup with Adams, Lost Highway nevertheless continued to pursue business with MAGNET on behalf of a number of other artists on the label's roster. I received my response the next day: "Ryan won't do it. The article MAGNET published was spiteful, disrespectful and out of line ... [Ryan] won't be doing anything with the publication again. Thanks."

If you thought Nixonian enemies lists disappeared when Tricky Dick split for California in his 'copter, think again. The problems we encountered in getting to Adams are unfortunately endemic and have plagued the way the rock-journalism camp has covered its subject matter since the genre appeared in the '60s. Perhaps Adams himself says it best: "I don't give a fuck what MAGNET thinks. I mean, who actually reads it? I'll take what I can get from *Rolling Stone*, *Q*, *Spin*, *NME*. I'm in good company." Or, at least, the kind of company that follows the pack mentality of hyping the Next Big Thing without much in the way of critical analysis. Here's the simple math for a number of music-related publications: Write favorable stories about artists, get more advertising revenue from their labels. Reap more ad revenue, become more profitable. Become more profitable, suspend disbelief into perpetuity and become an adjunct propaganda arm of the Biz.

Jim DeRogatis—rock critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, contributor to *Spin*, *Penthouse* and *Guitar World* and the author of the authoritative Lester Bangs biography *Let It Blurt*—has his own opinions on the matter. "Since the mid-1970s, this is the story of the mainstream rock press in America, the horrific sin of our supposedly honest artform," he says. "I was fired from my deputy editor's job at *Rolling Stone* after only eight months. I had written a negative review of a Hootie & The Blowfish record, and they substituted another, more favorable, review in its place. [*Rolling Stone* publisher] Jann Wenner is a fan of anything that sells 8.5 million copies. My feeling was that it was like having the keys to a Ferrari, but you could only drive it five miles an hour. *Rolling Stone* just wasn't the kind of rock journalism I wanted to do."

DeRogatis recalls an experience he had with Adams last year. "I was going to do a story on him for *Penthouse*," he says, "and called his publicists, who at first told me, 'He's done too much press this year already.' I mean, come on, Ryan's on every fucking matchbook cover in every bar I go to. Later, I was told that Ryan 'just wasn't comfortable with the idea of appearing in *Penthouse*.' Give me a fucking break. Have you been to one of this guy's live shows? Have you listened to the records? That's the ludicrousness of the publicity machine."

Adams' recent tour underscores this episode quite neatly. The first show of his solo-acoustic junket was at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium; midway through Adams' set, a heckler stood up and shouted a request for Bryan Adams' mullet-head anthem "Summer Of '69." The Ryan/Bryan joke has apparently gone stale for Adams, who immediately stopped the show, ranting, "Grab that guy and make him leave! I won't fuckin' play 'til you do!" Adams refunded the cost of the offender's ticket by handing him $30 out of his wallet, shouting, "I'll tell you what you can spend it on: an education!" and demanded that security escort the erstwhile comic out of the venue. Adams then serenaded him with an impromptu good-bye song, prompting a less-than-favorable review of the show by *Tennessean* music critic Peter Cooper, who took Adams to task for a mediocre evening and his arrogant behavior.

Adams is always at his most entertaining when backed into a corner by criticism, and Cooper walked into his office the next day to find the following love note on his voice mail: "You're just so smart, aren't you, man? You're so fucking smart. 'I'm so smart. I'm so post-collegiate with all my fucking little references. Punkish hardcore.' What about, 'Quintessential fuckin' band,' moron? What the fuck is wrong with you? Little redneck newspaper. Ooh, the *Tennessean*, blah-blah-blah. Whatever. You wouldn't know a good show if it bit you in the ass. You and your senior-citizen, little redneck fucking fucks. Whatever, you know? 'Let's, like, create it, let's judge it,' you know? Like, 'Let's turn it into what it's supposed to be.' But you don't know shit. You and your fucking piece-of-shit paper. Fuck you.'' The message: If the publicity army can't convince you of the proper perspective, maybe a visit from The Kid himself will help you to see the editorial light.

A month later, Adams was able to present his own spin on the events of the evening in an interview with

CMJ New Music Monthly. Unsurprisingly, his account of the incident differed somewhat from the *Tennessean*'s (according to Adams, the audience sided with him against the heckler, whom he called a "drunk"); also unsurprisingly, the *CMJ* writer didn't challenge Adams but essentially gave him a free pass to put his own polish and shine on what was ultimately portrayed as a minor misadventure. Needless to say, *CMJ*—having played the game according to our primer for music-biz success—probably earned scads of brownie points toward future opportunities to interact with Adams, be it about his music, his frequent public idiocy or his smokes of choice.

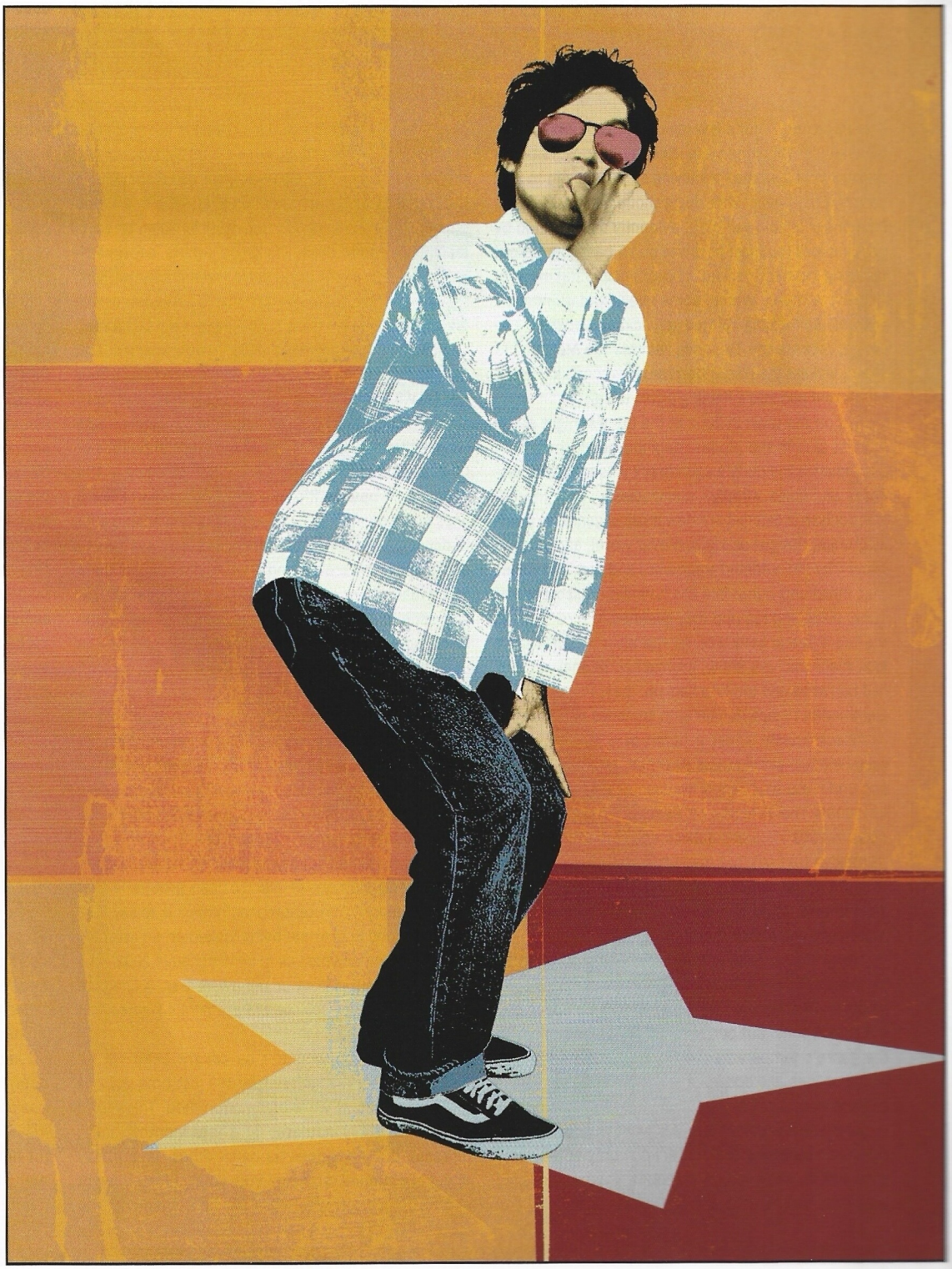
The point of sharing this "inside baseball" account is to afford a peek into the rotted-out hull of today's multi-billion-dollar music industry. The marketing cycle surrounding the release of each record you consider for purchase should be taken into account when stepping up to the counter of your local music dealer: Publicists get paid to seed discs with journalists who can be convinced to write reviews, show previews or feature stories within each release's marketing window. Positive stories are clipped and included in an artist's press kit, thus ensuring journalists are given broader exposure among their peers (thus advertising suitability for other gigs, since many write on a freelance basis). These stories influence the decisions of radio programmers and the marketeers who bring you MTV, another piece of the puzzle that determines what sells in the stores. All of this determines whether an artist is given ample support to tour behind any given release, which is how indie-label bands become the objects of multi-label bidding wars and how the R.E.M.s of the world are convinced to be promoted to The Show, where stakes are high and mega-million-dollar packages still exist despite the recession in which the industry is now mired.

In this respect, the business of rock is beginning to resemble the Hollywood model. In a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, writer Tad Friend deftly outlined all the pressures, hyperbole and artist-coddling that goes into marketing films these days, eerily foreshadowing what no doubt lies in store for the music wing of the entertainment industry.

"Press sells records but does so collectively and in kind of a trickle-up dynamic," says one veteran industry publicist, who requested anonymity. "The music press watches the music press and [repeats] what it does ... It's very monkey-see, monkey-do. Eventually—as in the case of the Strokes, for example—the artist [becomes] ubiquitous. This may entice TV bookers, radio programmers and MTV to get on board, provided that the artist fits into their formats. MTV and radio in this country are really run by businesspeople who are more about keeping it safe and sound than breaking any new ground."

Here's how crass it all gets: *USA Today* has proclaimed the "Nirvana sound" is officially on its way back, via new grunge-worthy releases from Pearl Jam, Audioslave (Rage Against the Machine fronted by former Soundgarden leader Chris Cornell) and the long-promised Nirvana best-of, which includes the official release of the group's final statement, "You Know You're Right." Undoubtedly, the upcoming generation of rawk-challenged youngsters who missed Nirvana and its ilk the first time around will find themselves squarely in the target-demographic gunsights of the publicity army seeking to kick-start the latest rock revival as its time in the spin cycle approaches.

All of which is to say: Look before you listen. The mind (and money) you save might be your own.



JOHN RITTER

PRETTY VACANT

ELECTROCLASH HAD THIS YEAR'S MODELS CHOOSING STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE IN NUMBERS NOT SEEN SINCE THE COCAINE '80S. HOW WE GOT DISAPPOINTED BY DANCE MUSIC—OR, IT'S HARD TO GET WET WHEN THINGS ARE THIS SHALLOW.

BY J. GABRIEL BOYLAN

If you watched TV for a few minutes in 2002, you probably saw it. An otherwise healthy-looking, smartly dressed young woman achieving an epileptic fit to that song by Dirty Vegas while riding shotgun in a Mitsubishi. (The driver of said vehicle is evidently undistracted by pop-and-lock routines; he drives on.) A beer commercial featuring the thick-necked, trucker's-friend frat metal of Andrew W.K.—or worse, some even jockier imitation thereof. Something related to *Jackass* (*Jackass: The Movie*, *Jackass* the TV show, *Jackass* the *Making The Video*, Jackass the Ritalin-deprived neighbor's kid diving off his roof and into a flaming picnic table).

Out on the town in 2002 at the hippest night at the hippest club in the hippest neighborhood, there's an even chance the party's soundtrack was steroidal, vacuous or, quite simply, electroclash. Background: Electroclash is ostensibly a new musical genre (as much as grunge, riot grrl or trip hop ever were), and you will know it by the outdated electronics and deadpan vocals that throb and bump like the juvenile crossbreeds of punk, disco and hip hop that gestated in NYC clubs in the late '70s and early '80s. Its attendant hedonist-trash look (because, you know, grunge had flannel, riot grrl had barrettes and trip hop had, uh, messed-up teeth) is glammed-out *Blade Runner* with snatches of hot pink.

"Electroclash is just a name of a festival," says sassy electro-skankstress Peaches, a Canadian-born and Berlin-mutated rapper whose lewd, liberating raps on 2000's *The Teaches Of Peaches* reached critical mass in 2002 via press notices and club appearances. "(Brooklyn DJ) Larry Tee made this festival and decided to make a tour out of it. He is a smart marketing man and knows that if you give something a title, Americans can attach themselves to it."

Many of your fellow citizens have already velcroed themselves to the affected apathy of electroclash-style artists like Fischerspooner, Adult, Chicks On Speed and A.R.E. Weapons. But perhaps just as sympathetic with the genre's temperament are the PiL-meets-Stooges sound of Liars, the dork garage of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the vapid punk funk of Radio 4.

All these bands capture the will to dance and get down and be young and snotty and horny at the same time, which, when you think about it, is what propelled punk (and rock 'n' roll and disco and hip hop) in the first place. If dance music's genius conceit is taking a hook and looping it—discarding verses, chord changes, harmonies and everything else—electroclash is that plus a healthy dose of fashion. And it's everywhere. On nine out of 10 *TRL* appearances, pop musicians can be spotted sporting mesh caps, Scorpions T-shirts, asymmetrical hairdos or some other retro-trash accoutrement. (Check out Pink, Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera, Shakira or, if you want the full package, Kelly Osbourne.)

A sort of boho version of boy-band svengali Lou Pearlman, Tee launched the Electroclash 2002 U.S. Tour last fall with Chicks On Speed, Peaches, W.I.T. and Tracy + The Plastics. On the surface, the lineup featured acts with legitimate agendas, from the identity politics of Chicks On Speed to the queer-tech of Tracy + The Plastics. On one night of the tour, I witnessed a lot of lines being snorted, a lot of hair being teased and a lot of dancing—but very little evidence of anything new or challenging. The crowd (and it was a crowd) was there to get loaded, get on the dancefloor and, hopefully, get someone to go home with them; unlike its New York-disco roots, electroclash is virulently hetero-centric. The post-feminist activism of the performers seemed to, well, clash with the fashion-whore meat market.

No big surprise there. Certainly pop music rarely aspires to much more than sex. But when underground culture captures a zeitgeist, don't we want it to mean something other than cheeky come-ons and sputtered half-witticisms? ("Check out my Chrissie behind/It's fine all of the time," sings Peaches on "Fuck The Pain Away.") According to Casey Spooner of Fischerspooner, the unifying element of electroclash groups is that they're intensely "presentational," which is to say they look good and appreciate being looked at. So listeners were as happy to watch as to be watched in 2002, having lost all sense of irony or self-awareness. A fine time for a deluxe-edition reissue of Pavement's *Slanted And Enchanted*, indeed.

So maybe you wouldn't be caught dead with a Fischerspooner CD, and maybe the last time you felt hip, actual guitars were being strummed. This music may be woefully outdated in a few months (if not already), but what does its banal ethos have to say about our cultural moment? You, young hipster, might scoff at some girl wearing a big belt, snap-cap and ankle boots (or a boy with a trucker's hat, orange riflery shades and the ubiquitous *faux*-hawk), but that doesn't mean you wouldn't have sex with her (or him).

The funny part is that this new sexuality is safer than safe. When the kids go home at night, they aren't slapping on cuffs, brandishing the riding crops and reading *Venus In Furs*. They're just seeing the mirage of that world in fashion spreads while listening to its shadow on the boombox. It's an odd kind of semi-escapism, where the radicalism is only half-baked but the shallowness is through and through. (How else to explain feminist art-punks Chicks On Speed providing the soundtrack for clubgoers finding their sweet tooth for crack cocaine?)

Not all music associated with electroclash's party-til-you-puke hedonism is bereft of content, however. Take Le Tigre, the post-punk (literally—the group is fronted by ex-Bikini Kill ranter Kathleen Hanna), politically edgy Casio-funk outfit that appears both in art magazines and at protest marches. "Keep On Livin'," from 2001's *Feminist Sweepstakes*, addresses suicide, depression and coming-out: "You don't need to scratch inside/Just please hold onto your pride." Le Tigre practices its politics as well; when MAGNET proposed a feature story on the band a little more than a year ago, the group agreed to participate on the condition that a female photographer be used. The piece didn't happen because of this—MAGNET does employ female photographers, but not on demand—however, there is something admirable about the band's conviction. Point is, Le Tigre is an anomaly. Its music is so fundamentally simplistic and junior varsity—and the lion's share of its contemporaries so apolitical—that you wonder if anyone is really listening.

Beyond dance music, everyone from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs to the Strokes has been busy mining the sleaziest elements of decades past. It's as if contemporary sin and smut weren't good enough. On the mainstream-rock side (and certainly seeing much more success) is Andrew W.K., who opened for Aerosmith and, in some cosmically brilliant alliance, performed the theme for *Jackass: The Movie*. W.K. composed much of his recent album, *I Get Wet*, using cheesy synths, professing only the most monosyllabic of invocations to party while sporting a circa-1983 metalhead-scuzzball uniform. For years, electronic music promised to be the new punk, dismantling inflated rock-star egos and putting musical potency in the hands of the real revolutionaries. Bands like OMD and the Human League—weak and soulless as they may have become—were still anxious, incisive and imaginative when they first got hold of their synthesizers. How come, 20 years later, the zenith of counterculture breakthrough can only scream "We're gonna get wasted!"?

Maybe things are now so grim and pessimistic that the only thing to protest is substance. The late-century economic boom is long gone—and with it, the money that made it a little easier to publish zines and release records. A shitty stock market and September 11 made quick work of all that optimism and made dissent seem not only beside the point but un-American to boot. So now the world political scene is hitting the fan, the warhawk right just took back Congress and you're probably reading MAGNET because you don't have a job. Meanwhile in hipster-land, the party didn't stop—it just put on blinders, bumped a line and started voting Republican. Or stopped voting altogether. Is it any wonder 2002's edgiest cultural document was Steve Earle's adult-contemporary claptrap?

But what else is there? Beck getting all weepy and personal rather than making fun of black music? Pedro The Lion holy-rolling over extramarital affairs? Wilco accidentally being poignant when Jeff Tweedy thought he was singing about pills? Maybe there's no room for social commentary in music anymore in the way that previous decades brought us cringe-worthy (but touching) songs of dissent. Maybe the political has become inexorably personal and sincerity has become apathy. Maybe music isn't where we should look for answers.

It's not fair; electroclash isn't evil. In fact, it's kind of fun, and sometimes it actually says things that are pretty right-on (Tracy + The Plastics: "We're modern, but we're not that modern/We're golden, uh uh yeah, we really are/We'll never make a living"). What isn't fun is when dissent isn't just commodified but obliterated and replaced with the fantasy that when we emerge from the disco inferno, everything will be all right.

BEING THERE NOW

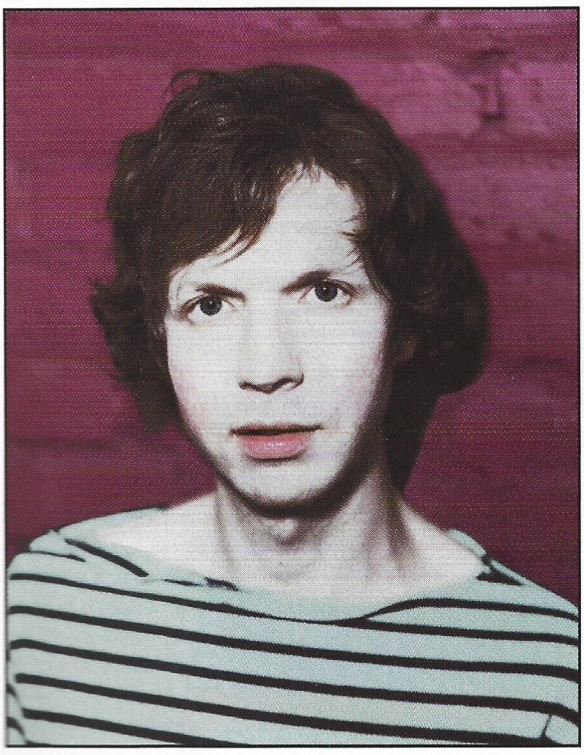
2002'S FRONT-LINE MISADVENTURES OF A MAGNET REPORTER-AT-LARGE, WHO MAILED US THESE TWO LETTERS FROM HIS FOXHOLE JUST OUTSIDE ELLIOTT SMITH'S HOUSE.

BY JONATHAN VALANIA

Dear MAGNET,

I know what you're thinking: another one of my the-dog-ate-my-Beck-cover-story letters. But I swear, I really tried this time. I've had Beck's publicist on speed dial since, like, July. Turns out Beck's publicist is also the publicist for some guy named Eminem; apparently, this Eminem fella is very popular with the kids and, well, he's been busy.

I guess it was partly my fault, too. As the months went by, I got kind of a "fuck this" attitude, and some of the story angles I proposed might—*might*—have given Beck's people a reason to drag their feet. Let's see, there was I Was A Scientologist And All I Got Was This Cheesy Funk Album. Sent that up the flagpole; nobody saluted. Then I suggested Oh, The Irony: "I've Never Meant A Word I Said," Declares Beck. Again, no salutes. Then I tried The Self-Importance Of Being Earnest: Beck Really Means It This Time. After a while, they stopped returning my phone calls altogether. Which is too bad, because I really like Beck. Even though it's fashionable to write Beck-has-lost-the-plot stories—and even though I wanted to love *Sea Change* and wound up only liking it—I still think he's important.



A few days ago, Beck's people finally called me and said I could have five minutes, but we would have to sit in separate tepees and communicate via smoke signals. I'm pretty sure what follows is what was said.

The word "irony" is often bandied about in your vicinity. I'm curious how you define that word.

I think a sense of humor is a sign that you are healthy and sane. If you took this whole culture and era seriously, I think it would do you in. I probably get labeled as being an ironist more than I am, and it's just because I have a sense of humor. Most bands are afraid to cheapen their music by having a sense of humor, but I think it just makes you more accessible, more human.

Give me an example—a song or an album—where Beck is being ironic, then one where Beck is being utterly sincere.

Hopefully, it's all mixed together. Besides, that's for people to decide. I think it reflects the sensibility of the listener—what they take from the music. You know, I love certain kinds of music that other people would dismiss as kitschy or tasteless. I remember four years ago, we were really getting into that whole early-'80s electro sound, and now it's really hip. But when we tried to do it, people thought it was very ironic. But I fucking love that first Depeche Mode album and stuff like Yaz. For me, it's like headbanger music—it just rocks.

Albums ago, you shelved the folk/hip-hop hybrid because it was in danger of becoming the new soft-verse/loud-chorus songwriting cliché.

There were so many bands doing it, it was so corny. It makes you a little self-conscious. You start to wonder if you're imitating them or they're imitating you.

I hear you've been working in that vein again with the Dust Brothers.

I have a ton of that material recorded and ready to go, sort of the *Odelay* sound. I've been sitting on it because I didn't know if it was still relevant. But you know, that's my sound. That crystallized what I was trying to do. I think it's a trap you fall into as an artist: You do something that causes a reaction, and then you try as hard as you can not to sound like that. I've done almost everything else I could away from that, so I'll probably wind up going back to that.

Is it true that when Rick Rubin heard *Odelay* before you put it out, he told you not to release it, that it wasn't good music?

He did.

How many unreleased songs do you have lying around?

Probably 40 or 50, maybe more.

I've heard rumors of a collaboration with P. Diddy that never surfaced. What was that all about?

He just started showing up at shows—this was at the height of *Odelay*. I guess he wanted to be a part of it. He showed up in Philadelphia and talked me into going into the studio with him after the show, but I was tired and told him I didn't have any ideas. So the next day, we went into Boyz II Men's studio and he had looped up "Benny And The Jets"—this was when he was still sampling other people's songs and just rapping. He wanted to do something really sincere, something about "my sunshine turns to rain." I don't know, I probably would do it now, but I couldn't get into it at the time, so I started rapping about how expensive my hormones are. I remember one of the Boyz II Men guys coming in and bobbing his head when he heard the track, and then when he heard my rap, he stopped bobbing his head. It was kind of awkward, and I just went on my way. I later heard the track on a Mary J. Blige record without my vocal on it.

If Winona Ryder had gone to jail, would you have baked her a cake with a file in it?

She's not going to jail.

It's a hypothetical, work with me here. I'm trying to wrap this up on a humorous note.

I don't want to touch that. I haven't seen her in years.

OK, last question. I know you've been asked this before, but I have never heard a convincing answer one way or the other. Are you a Scientologist?

Um, well ... I'm a ... [*Chuckles sheepishly*] I'm a ... I'm me. Next question.

Hope you print this,
Jonathan Valania

Dear MAGNET,

Well, it's been quite a year. Beck. Paul Westerberg. Wilco. Which reminds me, a funny thing happened to me after the Wilco cover story was published in May. Actually, a bunch of funny things. First, Jeff Tweedy stopped talking to me. No big change there: He barely talked to me while I was trying to write the damn thing. And it's not like I'll shed a tear when I'm not invited to the next Wilco slumber party. I love Wilco's music, but I've had more laughs hanging out with cancer patients. I think you get a sense of this when you watch *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, Sam Jones' Wilco rockumentary. Yeah, that's me in the movie wearing a hat I've been told more than once is "dumb"—but hey, I'm stickin' by it. (And how about the choppers on *Rolling Stone*'s David Fricke? Hands down, the best teeth in

rock criticism.) I must say, though, I was a little disappointed after I saw the film. I really thought it would be more about me and my life and my troubles with record companies and Jay Bennett.

But seriously, one of the hard lessons learned from all of this: Never write an unflinching, dirty-laundry-and-all, behind-the-scenes cover story about Bennett getting kicked out of Wilco when the guy sleeps on your girlfriend's floor every time he and his new sidekick, Edward Burch, play in Philadelphia—which was, like, five times since that story was published. Trust me, it can make for some uncomfortable moments around the breakfast table.

I guess I first got the sense Bennett was less than happy with the article when he told a mutual friend he was going to break my fingers. After watching him get kicked to the curb in the Wilco film, I went back and reread my story. Although I stand by every word, there are a few things about Bennett that got lost in the he-said/he-said bullshit. While he may be a handful to play in a band with, Bennett is an exceptionally talented musician, and a large part of the credit for the huge artistic leaps Wilco has made with every album since 1995's *A.M.* should be laid at his feet. And that Ed Burch might be the nicest guy in rock—and he can really sing, too. *The Palace At 4am (Part 1)*, the album they made together, is one of 2002's sleeper gems. An acoustic version of it, *Palace 1919*, should be available on the duo's Web site (www.bennett-burch.com) by the time you read this. Or just ask them for it the next time they show up in your town with their Skipper-and-Lil'-Buddy act, which they've performed live something like 150 times since April.

Vowing to let the fingers break where they may, I ventured backstage before a recent Bennett & Burch show with my tape recorder to clarify Bennett's role in the making of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and get his reaction to *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*.

On the question of how much he actually played on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*: "I am 100-percent involved in that record—songwriting, playing, arranging, and I recorded the whole thing—as much as any other Wilco record. Somebody said, 'You don't play as many instruments on it as you did on *Summer Teeth*.' Well, that would be impossible. I would have to be the lead singer as well. John (Stirratt) only plays bass on eight of the songs, Leroy (Bach) isn't on it very much. Most of the record is me, Jeff and Glenn (Kotche). Bottom line, it's safe to say I am playing at least four or five primary instruments on each track."

On *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*: "I have not seen the movie, but I lived the uncut version. I will say frankly that the movie, in some very specific ways, is very deceptive. It takes scenes and uses them extremely out of context and uses them to tell a story. Sam happened to not be there for some of the real conflict. He had about three scenes he could make look like conflict, and so he used what he had. I don't know if that's right as a moviemaker. I'll admit that there was controversy, but it's not the stuff that Sam has on film. I've been told of three or four scenes that have been used in the movie, and they are honestly far less extreme than an argument that [Burch] and I had four days ago onstage, and we are sitting here right now in the same room. There's a scene in *Broadcast News* where William Hurt fakes the reaction-shot tear. There is a lot of faking the reaction-shot tear. The Jeff puking (scene) is bullshit, cut out of sequence. He puked before the argument. But I'm not upset with Sam; he didn't get the controversy on film, so he had to construct it. I always tell people, 'If somebody films you for 80 hours, they could make you look however they want.'"

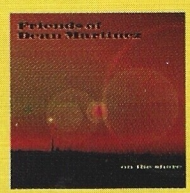
Two other things that got lost in my Wilco story: First, Ken Coomer is a *great* rock drummer. Got that? *Great*. Second, the new album by Stirratt's side band, Autumn Defense, may well overshadow whatever comes after *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* in terms of pure pop beatitude.

One last thing: Bennett assures me he would never break my fingers.

Your Pal,

J.V.

TAKE A PEEK at what NARNACK RECORDS is releasing next!



FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ

"On The Shore"
- JAN 28 -

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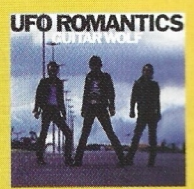
GUITAR WOLF

"UFO Romantics"
- FEB 11 -



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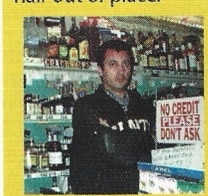

COACHWHIPS

"Get Yer Body Next Ta Mine"
- FEB 11 -

Leaders of the SF underground spazz core, freak fest, **Coachwhips** release their second full length. With former Pink and Brown frontman **John Dwyer** it's so exciting you'll need two pairs of undies and an extra box spring. Garage rock? My sweet ass.

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POINT/COUNTERPOINT

DID AGING ACRONYMED ALT-ROCKERS GVSB, SY, JSBX, GBV AND RFTC PHONE IT IN OR KEEP ON ROCKIN' THE FREE WORLD IN 2002? ANDREW EARLES ESPOUSES THE FORMER, COREY DUBROWA THE LATTER.

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS You Can't Fight What You Can't See (Jade Tree)

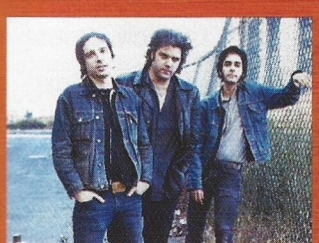
When exactly was GVSB *not* phoning it in? In fact, the band deserves credit for transcending mediocrity by being a very unique kind of bad. Two bass players (red flag! red flag!), a *faux*-cocktail-nation aesthetic (boys, it's *two-thousand*-and-two), a bastardization of Mark E. Smith's gift to vocalizing and roots in the early-'90s Touch And Go testosterone party—roots that are evidently tough to shed. *You Can't Fight What You Can't See* will enjoy a short residency in the disc changers of failed dot-commers before going under the saw.

Upon extricating itself from the hellish *Freak*on*ica* (1998's one-shot cup o' joe in the bigs), GVSB returns to the underground—older, craftier, now 50 percent more perverted. The resurrected GVSB no longer labors to get its freak on; the band's ill-sexy vibe serves as the tar pit where all the little girls go to disappear, with Scott McCloud making like Psychedelic Fur Richard Butler with a Son Of Sam fixation (all serial killa, no filla). All is copacetic once more in the East Village slum-world where this lineup of psychological profiles subsists.

SONIC YOUTH Murray Street (Geffen)

The location of their studio, you say? Sounds like the title of a failed sitcom to me. The conspicuous backseat taken by Kim Gordon's voice has been explained by an amusing excuse: Riot Grrranny wanted to concentrate harder on guitar. Yeah, right. Jim O'Rourke fills the Scrappy-Doo position as a last-ditch gambit for cred, and the band jumping onstage during the Mission Of Burma reunion was a transparent, insulting gesture. Sonic Youth would've been a one-album, forgotten footnote had Mission Of Burma never existed.

And then there were five. Jim O'Rourke awoke one fine day to find himself officially elected to membership of the best band to emerge from the '80s ectoplasmic-guitar-goo camp. All this simple gesture did was beget the best Sonic Youth record since 1992's *Dirty*. The symphonic six-string storms that hover about ongoing serial "Karen Revisited" and feline closer "Sympathy For The Strawberry" indicate a body of work that ranks alongside—yes, I'll dare to speak the words—Sonic Youth's hallowed 1988 benchmark *Daydream Nation*.



JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION Plastic Fang (Matador)

Everyone's favorite mid-'90s slummer needs to spend the new millennium alongside the Reverend Horton Heat arousing frat boys in date-rape clubs. At least Spencer isn't pulling that "look, I've got a real live black man onstage with me" stunt anymore. His new one appears to be "see if you can make it through the entire CD." *Plastic Fang* is a good backward glance at how all the poor Spencer imitators of 1995 sounded—and is entirely unnecessary. Promo copies of the album came with novelty plastic fangs; they should've come with a noose.

In the '90s, Spencer's weird merger of the postmodern and the ancient made him an Old Economy stock in a New Economy world, but here Jon-boy gives up the grime and steps up the swagger. He may still strike cynics as the devil's idea of a bad Elvis impersonator, but *Plastic Fang* roars with a kick-ass conviction. When the flat-out *rawk* guitar moves of "Sweet N Sour" go to war with the straight-up chooglin' of "Money Rock'N'Roll," you're inclined to admit it ain't all that bad for an Ivy League drop-out with a degree in Advanced Irony.

GUIDED BY VOICES Universal Truths And Cycles (Matador)

Bob Pollard would emit a shriek and melt down a floor drain if a doctor said he'd have to stop making pop music or risk death. So we're watching some kind of medical condition being played out—a pop-song Tourette's. Not everything blurted out is interesting, though. Tedious and painful, actually. This "return to an indie after an unsuccessful major-label jaunt" LP produced an obscene amount of "back to the salad days" rhetoric; don't be fooled. There are a handful of good songs here, but that means very little in the context of a GBV album.

I'm not exactly a company man, but I play one on TV, and (as such) I'm gonna stick to the party line when it comes to GBV's highly anticipated return to the junior circuit. This minor masterpiece has Party Bob peeling off more sweet tarts than a mad dash to the movie-theater lobby during intermission. Herein lie all the signs of a classic GBV offering: yet another round of lineup changes, sparkling melody snippets that serve as songs and an ongoing affection for the Who that confirms Pollard's status as the Pete Townshend of his generation.

ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT Live From Camp X-Ray (Vagrant)

The Rocket From The Crypt curse says your spin-offs will always be superior to the parent band. See Hot Snakes, Drive Like Jehu and the Sultans for proof. Now that curse includes the fact that no one is paying attention to the parent band. *Live From Camp X-Ray* is by far the best album in the midst of these evils, but is anyone listening? In this era, when rock is a fuckable, bankable commodity, this record will invoke plenty of "they were doing it all along" music journalism, but is anyone reading? More sad than bad.

[*Affecting my best "point/counterpoint" pose*] "Jane, you ignorant slut." Even when Earles and I agree, we disagree: He says *Live From Camp X-Ray* is the most listenable of this batch of releases, while I insist the band's pathetic speedbump of an album sucked more eggs than Adam Yauch. Boys: *Give it up now*, before everyone who purchased 1995's *Scream, Dracula, Scream!* forgets its classic-record status and wishes you into the turf. Move along, mustn't grumble: It's all been Hoovered into the younger generation's punk-pop template™.

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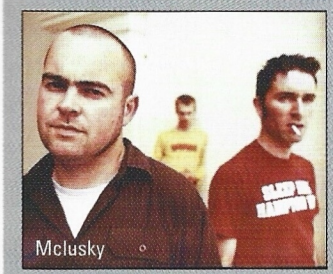
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POP GROUP "Words Disobey Me"
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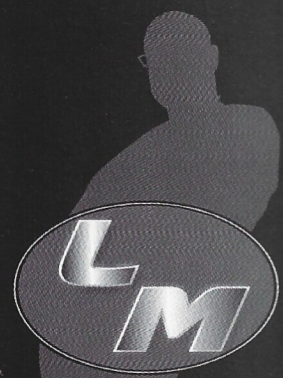

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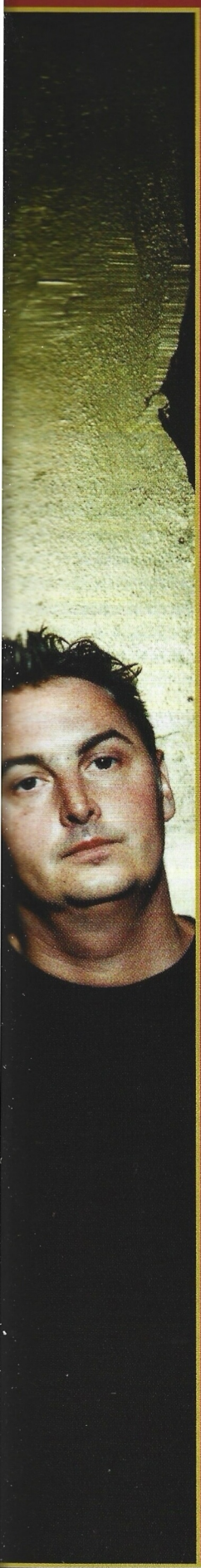
REDEYE

(l-r): Stone Gossard, Matt Cameron, Eddie Vedder, Jeff Ament, Mike McCready



VITAL SIGNS

BETTER MEN: Single white band, late 30s, seeks long-term relationship with fans and muse a decade after painful grunge divorce. Ask for PEARL JAM.

By Fred Mills / Photos By Danny Clinch

In October 1992, Pearl Jam's debut landed in the number-two slot of the *Billboard* album chart. Along with the culmination of *Ten*'s yearlong ascent came the Seattle sound—Nirvana, Soundgarden, et al—and an ensuing media-lens glare that would eventually fry to a crisp most of the bands that flocked to the Northwest seeking fame, fortune and heroin habits.

Pearl Jam is practically alone among its peers at having lasted the ensuing decade. Granted, this survival has been in true bloodied-but-unbowed fashion; Pearl Jam's travails as a band operating under its own set of rules are the stuff of legend. However, "survival" for Pearl Jam now takes on new shadings. Successful or not, the band faces a far different environment than it did 10 years ago, one where the term "American Idol" is synonymous with "building a musical career" and "maverick artistic streak" is equal to "kiss of death."

Pearl Jam's seventh studio album, *Riot Act*, might never have happened. As the band's last tour came to a close near the end of 2000, Eddie Vedder, Stone Gossard, Mike McCready, Jeff Ament and Matt Cameron had slammed one book shut—and not a minute too soon.

When the tour resumed in the U.S. a month later, audiences were unusually supportive, and Pearl Jam was able to soldier on. Just the same, once all remaining concert commitments had been honored, the band, relieved and exhausted, scattered to concentrate on personal projects throughout 2001. Guitarists McCready and Gossard had their Rockfords and Brad side bands, respectively, with Gossard additionally cutting a solo album, *Bayleaf*. Drummer Cameron, Pearl Jam's most recent recruit and an in-demand session musician since Soundgarden folded in '97, toured and recorded with Wellwater Conspiracy. Bassist Ament worked with Kings X's Doug Pinnick. Vedder had the occasional solo gig, performed at a number of benefits and did a lot of surfing in Hawaii.

Eventually, the five men found themselves checking back in with one another, comparing notes, talking about song ideas. Last February, Pearl Jam reconvened at its Seattle warehouse for the rehearsals that would soon segue into the recording sessions for *Riot Act*.

Pearl Jam needs this album. From the nearly 10 million units shifted for *Ten* to the 750,000 in chump change (relatively speaking) moved by 2000's *Binaural*, the band's fiscal fortunes have steadily declined. With the terms of Pearl Jam's contract with Epic Records now completed, it would be advantageous for the group to be able to bargain from a position of strength. Whatever Pearl Jam performing two consecutive nights on *Letterman*. Talk to the press? Definitely; this time around, the band agreed to two weeks' worth of interviews. By some standards, that's nothing, but for Pearl Jam, it's the equivalent of giving in to the Spanish Inquisition.

Ask the band members about all this and you'll get, at least initially, the party line: They feel *Riot Act* is a strong record, they're extremely proud of it, they're excited enough this time to talk to the press about it, etc. That's all no doubt true.

But Pearl Jam is conscious there's a lot riding on *Riot Act*, and this goes beyond mere matters of chart stats and contract talks, extending well into the realm of the group's basic psychological needs. Hardly embodying the cliché of the jaded superstar act increasingly removed from its roots, Pearl Jam is clearly seeking the approval of rock 'n' roll fans, and it does so with the kind of eager, nervous energy normally the domain of fresh-faced, get-in-the-van garage combos. Perhaps it's always stuck in the group's craw how some still cite Kurt Cobain's early dismissals of Pearl Jam—dredged up anew in Cobain's *Journals*, in which he sniffs disparagingly of so-called alternative bands that are "nothing but stripped-down, ex-Sunset Strip hair-farming bands ... I would love to be erased from our association with Pearl Jam"—as reason to harbor a

"IT'S NOT AN EASY THING TO DO, TO TR
ON SOMETHING. YOU'RE GONNA BE PUT U

There had been that disastrous June 30 show in Copenhagen. At the Roskilde Festival, people got hurt, people died and the international press tried to blame Pearl Jam for the tragedy. Some in the band's camp wondered if there was any point in even carrying on.

"We all thought at the time," says Kelly Curtis, Pearl Jam's manager, "'This could be it.'"

"The days following [Roskilde], we were all pretty inconsolable," says Vedder, "practically in the fetal position over the reality of what had happened."

collectively minded youth movement existed a decade ago has long since been extracted, refracted and distracted to the point where even the most respected artists have to shout over cultural static and white noise.

While Pearl Jam might once have steadfastly thumbed its nose at by-the-book promotional tactics, it now finds itself in the curious position of having to adapt, at least somewhat, to the rules of the game. Film a video? Check; one for "I Am Mine" was shot in a Seattle club in September. Go on TV? No problem; November found

punker-than-thou attitude when calibrating the group's underground/hip quotient. If pulling back the veil a bit more than usual will help Pearl Jam connect more strongly with its audience, well ...

• • •

Gossard: Well, shit—we'd love to be perceived as an underground band! [*Laughs*] We're mostly interested in talking to magazines that seem to focus on the music, and MAGNET seems to be one of those where the main gist of the magazine is just obviously for people who

are real music fans. It's exciting to talk to people who are excited about music. We are psyched about the record, and that gives you impetus to go, "OK, we can do press." And we always do some; this time, we're doing more than usual.

McCready: We sat down and had a band conversation and said, "Let's try to promote this record." In my mind, I was thinking how I was watching U2 when they did their last record, and they did a huge amount of press for it. I don't think as a band we would ever say, "We want to be the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band." But we want to be a really good band.

Gossard: I think the press does a good job of giving us a fair shake. The reality of who you are and how you're portrayed in the press, and even trying to assess what your image is in the press on any objective scale, is sort of a weird philosophical question in itself. But by not doing a lot of press and by sticking to our guns as a band, I think we've managed to gain a little bit more respect from some people that might not have cared as much about us otherwise.

Vedder: It's interesting how some of the interviews I've been doing, some of the people in their early 20s said they were listening to our group when it first came out and it inspired and steered them in a certain direction. They went on to start bands, work for magazines—and we get credit for that? Incredible. You know, you hear about relationships being started, people came together because they met at a concert. If you think about it, that's so much bigger than the band.

• • •

Echoes of golden-era Pearl Jam—brawny, juggernaut rock leavened by cathartic, psychedelic soul—are heard throughout *Riot Act*, but there are also newfound levels of diversity and depth. Apparently, the musical palate-cleansing of 2001 had the desired effect, for the recording sessions steamed along rapidly—barely a month and the album was done—and more easily than any studio recording since *Ten*. Both albums

AND TAKE A STAND FOR RIDICULE."

boast a spontaneous vibe and a defiant feel, and while it would be foolhardy to suggest it's 1992 all over again (despite media proclamations that the "Seattle sound is back" thanks to *Riot Act*, a "new" Nirvana song and former Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell's return to form with Audioslave), some sort of renewal definitely transpired during the making of the album.

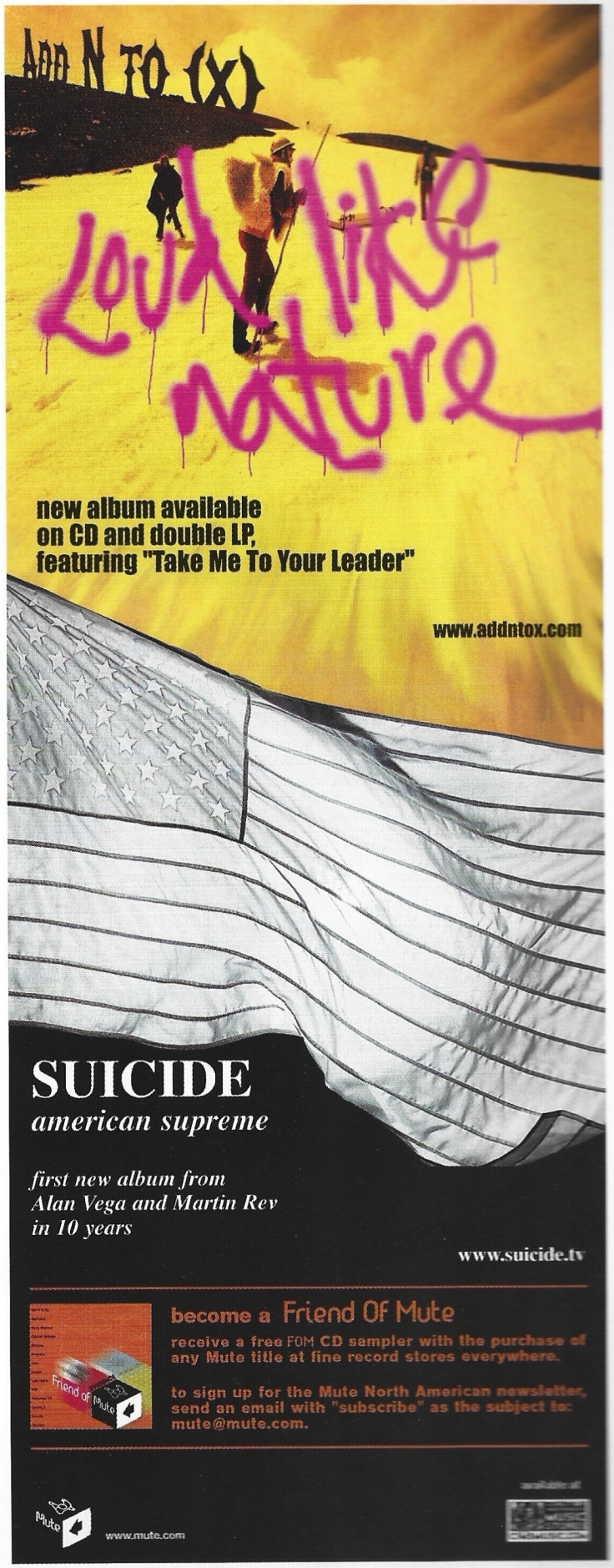
With all five members bringing in songs—the culmination of a democracy that's been brewing within the group since around the time of 1998's *Yield*—and a friend of the band, Adam Kasper (Soundgarden, Foo Fighters, Queens Of The Stone Age), sharing production chores, the sessions fostered a lot of give-and-take among the musicians. A keyboard-playing friend of Vedder's, Kenneth "Boom" Gaspar, practically became a sixth member of Pearl Jam during the recording.

• • •

Cameron: What you're hearing on the record is "live," the sound of a band playing together in a room—which you don't hear too much these days, because everybody just totally analyzes their individual sound until they're separated sonically from everyone else. I think we tried to break down some of that separation.

McCready: Matt being more involved, more cohesive as a 100-percent band member now; that was important. He brought in three songs—new blood for the band. Also, Boom came in, and it was just like his name: *boom*, just right in the mix and a different melodic take to the songs. Overall, this was really pretty effortless to do, which was not the case always in the past.

Vedder: I used to write all the lyrics, and sometimes lyrics just happen right away, but if they don't, you have to figure out, "OK, what is this music saying? What goes with this?" You have to create a whole story for one, and it becomes like writing 10 short stories for a record. It can be a little daunting, and once you get behind, all of a sudden it loses its spark and it's not fun anymore. If you're in a band and you get to make records and it's not fun, then there's gotta be a way to get that back. Now, people come in with ideas, lyrics, complete songs, and we just stick 'em in the collective pot.



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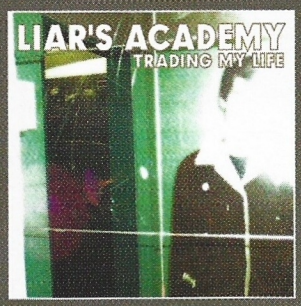

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Ament: Around the *Vitalogy* and *No Code* period, that was when Ed was the last guy in the room, and we kind of left him to finish the records. I think he was getting sick of it. I remember being at the studio when he said, "Man, I can't. I don't know if I can do this anymore. I can't be the guy here who's trying to finish up 15 to 18 songs." So I took it as a challenge to start writing a lot more again. I think it makes all of us feel that we're a little more a part of the band when we have just a little voice on the record, a little slice of our life that's part of the record.

• • •

Riot Act arrives on the heels of a lot of soul-searching for Pearl Jam. It touches upon many universal themes (chief among them: the healing power of love), invokes classic imagery (the ocean, the earth, cycles of birth and death) and, aside from some very pointed political observations (the scathing Dubya tribute "Bu$h Leaguer"), seems to meditate at length on loss and being left alone to deal with it. Front and center is "I Am Mine," whose lyrics ("All the innocents lost at one time ... the meanings that get left behind") have led to speculation it's about September 11.

• • •

Vedder: ["I Am Mine"] was the first song that got written after Roskilde. Looking back, it seems to be reflective of what happened in New York, too, because I remember the pain I felt and how it had a direct lineage to what we'd gone through at Roskilde and knowing some of the families (of the dead fans). So it felt like we could relate to the loss. There's only one line I changed. I think it said "significance between the lines," and I added "we may need to hide." When it says "significance between the lines," that's talking about the major media and the information that's being funneled about Afghanistan—even now, about Iraq. There's information that we're not getting, and that's when it gets scary and we may need to take cover.

Gossard: I don't think anything on the album speaks about [September 11] directly. Part of being comfortable as an artist is allowing yourself to experience those moments of transcendence, of some of the pain in the world. But it's probably the most political album we've made in a while ... I find the record pretty defiant in a lot of ways. "I Am Mine," "Can't Keep," those songs that are kind of about looking death in the face and saying, "I'm not going to be afraid of you!" It's a grey emotion, definitely, but he's not going into it with fear. He's going into it with energy.

• • •

Politics: Pearl Jam's had a few. A quick scan of the band's two official Web sites reveals a wealth of information about such organizations as Artists For A Hate Free America, Doctors Without Borders, PETA, the Bridge School, the Recording Artist's Coalition and the West Memphis Three. Benefit concerts are practically a way of life for Pearl Jam. (Whenever the group plays a Seattle show, all proceeds are given to charities.) The band members work outside the spotlight as well: McCready speaks regularly at substance-abuse recovery centers and Gossard helps build houses on Indian reservations.

Pearl Jam has put a lot of time and energy into its stands when it could otherwise have been concentrating on music; a photo of a weary-looking Gossard and Ament, standing with hands raised while taking their oaths before a Congressional committee during the Ticketmaster hearings, remains an indelible visual emblem of the group's mid-'90s period. Lesser bands would've cracked under the distractions and pressures.

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Cameron: It's not an easy thing to do initially, to try and take a stand on something. Anytime you do strike out on a cause, you're gonna be put up for ridicule.

Vedder: I guess the one fear is that you dilute your voice by having an opinion on *every* issue—not saying that they all aren't important. To be honest, there's a lot of things that I feel more comfortable with contributing in ways like licking envelopes, mailing things out, just doing grunt work. A little more in the trenches. And that's what I'd done for years before, with pro-choice issues, environmental issues. Even before the Seattle music explosion. So it's just trying to continue to be someone and be a band that's not a liability to the planet. To add something. [*Laughs*] It helps you sleep at night. I was with a friend of mine, Tim Robbins, and we were talking about Steve Earle's record, about the one song, "John Walker's Blues." You know, Steve Earle's been through it, he's got balls and doesn't give a fuck. And I think that's an important way to be in these times. We have to maintain our ability to criticize and create discussions. To be aware of the truth and why decisions are made when it comes to bombing another country and using our military and taxpayer dollars. And then with the Patriot Act that they came up with, it seems like half of our rights to privacy were eroded in a single swing. That is frightening to the core. We should be able to keep having discussions about not just these new issues that have come up but the old issues we were battling pre-September 11: corpo-

rate globalization and the WTO, workers' rights and trade agreements, basic foreign policy. Another friend, Howard Zinn, a Boston guy and historian who wrote a great book called *Terrorism And War*, said sometimes it takes a really big thing to get people motivated: when they start feeling the stuff in their own homes and it hits their pockets. And I think it's happening now, but maybe people aren't quite aware of it yet.

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The survival issues outlined at the beginning of this article weren't idle ruminations. Aside from Mudhoney, Pearl Jam is pretty much the last man standing among the grunge groups of the '90s; in terms of success and fame, the band's only real peers are R.E.M. and U2. But let's face it: These days, rock bands treat their craft like it's nothing more than a reality program, forming for the express purpose of getting a big label deal they can milk until it's time to crash, burn and sell their tale to VH-1. Some have wondered whether Pearl Jam's adherence to the old classic-rock model—all for one and one for all—is hopelessly outmoded.

The evidence suggests Pearl Jam can continue to operate at a comfortable level. Contract renewal negotiations with Epic are already underway; manager Curtis indicates that rather than a large advance and a long list of artist perks, the band is primarily seeking ownership of its master recordings. A world tour commences in February, but per standard Pearl Jam procedure, it will be held to a manageable few months rather than the yearlong trek most superstar bands choose. And the group is always seeking new ways to keep things fresh; in an elaboration on the previous tour's strategy (all the *Binaural* shows, save Roskilde, were released as budget-priced CDs), each date on the *Riot Act* tour will be available online for download immediately after the performance.

There's also the simple fact that, to a man, the members of Pearl Jam swear they still get a huge buzz from playing together. So don't expect the band to call it a day anytime soon.

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Ament: If there comes a time when everybody's bored and not into it and it doesn't feel right, maybe it's time to give it a rest. But as long as we're having fun—you always know after the first few days when you're back rehearsing.

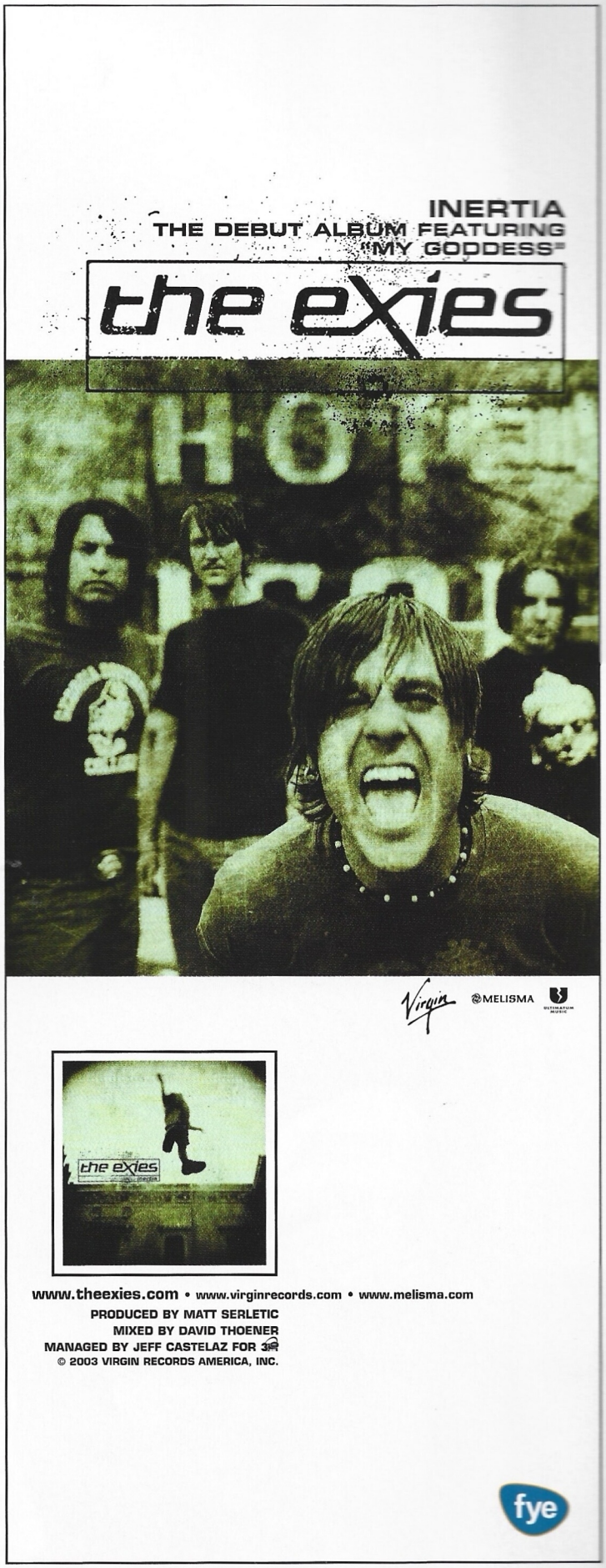
McCready: We have known each other for a pretty long time, and we know how the band dynamics work. There's generally not a lot of huge surprises. At the same time, we [get] excited to be in a room together again—to get the family together.

Cameron: This band is a good model because they went against the grain and took some of the most unpopular positions a successful rock group could take. Skirted around a lot of the historical methods of promotion that most bands have to go through—and they survived. When they made me an invitation to join, I was still unsettled from the Soundgarden divorce, but these guys were really cool: "Whenever you're ready." In a band, you want to be made to feel like you have something to contribute. They did, and I do.

Gossard: Everyone in this band is engaged in life. We're all moving at our own tempo, yet at the same time, we're all actively living. Nobody is sitting at home spending long hours in front of the TV. As a human being, if you just remain fresh in your long-term commitment to each other—like, "This is home, this is what I like to go back to, this feels good"—by having that in your head when you do come back, you're energized to make music and it comes naturally. It's significantly different than it was six years ago, just the respect and feeling of security the band provides. The sanity and happiness within the band is palpable.

Vedder: You know, after [Roskilde], Pete and Roger from the Who both called, and the one question I asked Pete was, "What does this mean karmically? Why did it happen to us, since it seems we had worked so hard to maintain safety for the people who came?" He actually turned it around: "It might have happened to you because you could handle it." I thought about that a lot.

Ament: A few years ago, I don't think we were communicating very well; no one was expressing what they wanted or what their needs were. Having gone through that and getting to a point where we can talk to one another without it turning into a big fight or a big drama, well, that's a treat. That's the good part about being grown up. [*Laughs*] You know, I'm gonna be 40 in March, and I was talking about this the other day with some friends of mine. We still skateboard together; we were friends growing up, skating. Being 40 years old and still skating, we were saying we were kind of rewriting the rules of being young. It's such a young sport that nobody's ever been this old. And rock 'n' roll's kinda the same way. The Stones, the Who, Neil Young and Bob Dylan are all rewriting the rules of rock 'n' roll. You can do it for a long time and you can do it the right way and not pretend that you're 20. You can do it with honesty. **M**



"WHEN I WRITE SONGS, IT'S JUST SORT OF DREAMING IN AN AWAKE STATE."

diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle. The cow jumped over the moon.")
"I got it at a thrift store," says Arthur. "I used it on a recording; it's on 'This Heart Will Swallow Us' on the first *Junkyard Hearts* EP."

Joseph Arthur in a small studio apartment is like a shark in a goldfish tank; he'll quickly devour, disassemble or doodle on anything in sight. Right now, he's taking a black Sharpie to the plastic lid of a coffee cup and drawing a face encircled by hieroglyphs.

"It's constant," he says. "I feel best when I have something going. It's a vehicle for me to fight self-destruction. It's like a fuel. If I don't use it [in a creative] way, I use it in a negative way. It doesn't have to be music; I was obsessively writing journals and putting them on the Internet for a while. Lately I've been programming electronic music on my laptop. I don't feel like I work that much. I feel like I'm pretty lazy, I sleep until noon. Basically, there's just a lot of hours to fill."

Arthur's latest album is called *Redemption's Son* (Enjoy/Universal), and it's a collection of undetached love songs that, even if they're sometimes less-than-revelatory when put under the microscope ("Come up to my place/And then let's embrace," goes one questionable couplet), remain winning because all of them bear heavy, gorgeous melodies and subtle, mood-enhancing arrangements. Percussion and strings notwithstanding, Arthur recorded most of the album in his apartment—or, more specifically, in the ProTools-enabled Ernest Hemingway Studios.

"I don't know why I called it that," says Arthur, who's been putting the studio to use recording the debut album by singer/songwriter Tara Angel. "I just like Ernest Hemingway Studios. Was he gay? I heard he was gay and couldn't accept it. Maybe it's not true. Who knows?"

Photograph, black and white, with wood frame #1. Found above doorway to kitchen. Pictured is Van Morrison.

"My friend Yves gave it to me for my birthday," says Arthur. "He's a French guy."

Arthur is popular in France and some other European countries.

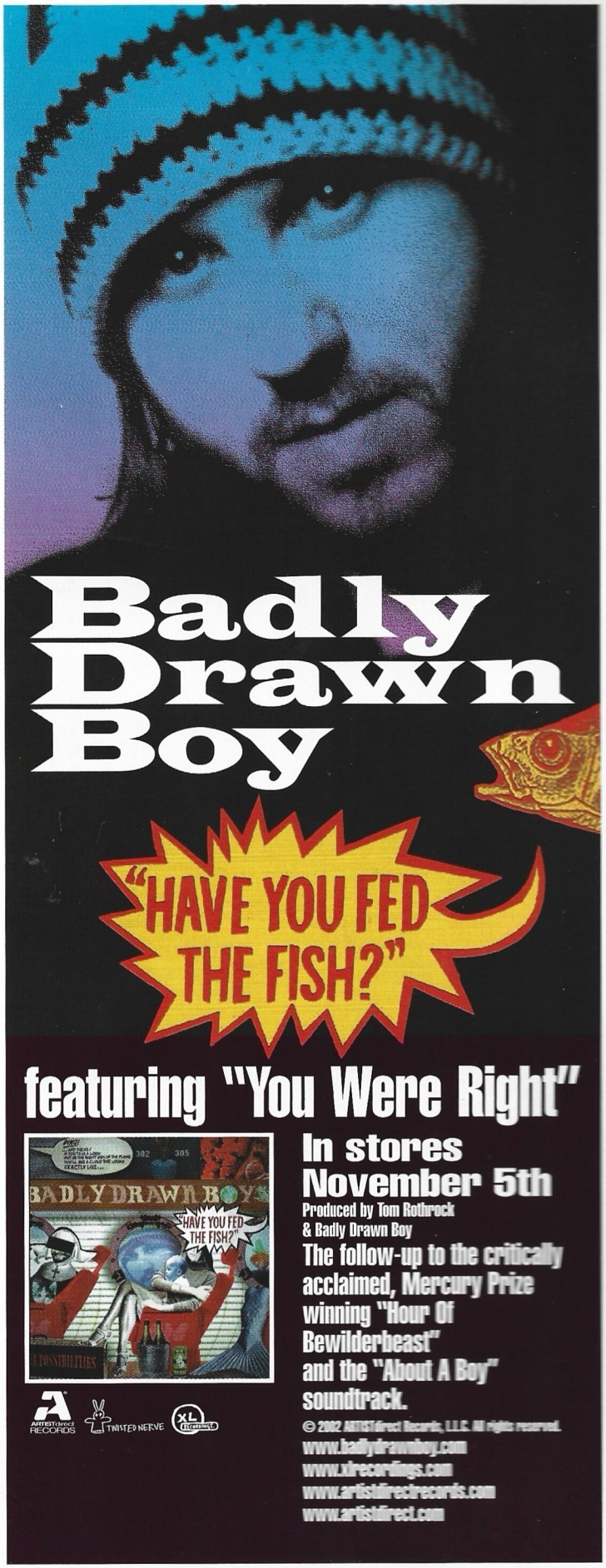
"I'm not that popular in Europe," says Arthur. "But I should probably let that illusion live. I'm like Elvis over there—you don't even know. I'm as big as David Hasselhoff in Germany. [*Laughs*] I do OK. It's France."

The scouting report on Arthur has him listed as a downcast and sulky sort of singer/songwriter, one that critics have hyperbolically compared to Leonard Cohen—albeit a Cohen endowed with the faint knowledge of trip-hop beats and a vocal range that allows him to swerve from moody falsetto to a smoky, scraped-up rasp. *Redemption's Son* is one big, beautiful apology—nearly every song has its protagonist covering his fuck-ups or begging for forgiveness. If *Come To Where I'm From* was a road map to Arthur's dark side, *Redemption's Son*—with its pervasive appeals to Jesus—has him beginning to see the light. While Arthur isn't exactly moping anymore, he isn't praying, either.

"I'm not religious," says Arthur. "I get surprised at what comes out. I feel like it's accessing deeper concerns than this level up here, like what should I go get to eat. When I write, it's just sort of dreaming in an awake state ... People seek God because they need God. And you don't need God unless you're in a lot of pain. Why would you look? You'd be happy watching TV and playing board games."

The best track on the album, "Dear Lord," reawakens Van Morrison's Sunday-morning R&B, right down to its jangling guitar and spirited harmonica. The song's especially great chorus has Arthur singing a bass-vocal harmony in such a deep register that he sounds for all the world like a 60-year-old black man holding down the back row of a Baptist choir.

Photograph, black and white, with wood frame #2. Found in living room. Pictured is Bob Dylan.



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"ART AND MUSIC SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECTED."

Also from Yves, the French guy. *Redemption's Son* was released almost a year ago in Europe, and the four *Junkyard Hearts* EPs are available in the U.S. only as imports or over the Internet. Arthur is more prolific than is presumably profitable for his label, and with 16 tracks spread over more than 75 minutes, *Redemption's Son* is easily about five songs too long. Arthur knows this.

"It's two records, basically," he says. "I'm going to take a major shot for that soon. It's in the pipeline, I'm sure. And that's fine. I don't feel like records have to be formatted for one listening experience. A novel isn't like that. A movie is. But a record doesn't necessarily have to be like that. You can digest a record over years."

Arthur has dozens of songs piling up on his shelves. While he finds the "if the song's good, you'll remember it" theory of retention comforting, he records song fragments on a dictaphone as the inspiration comes. "It depends on your state of mind," he says. "Am I smoking pot during this month or not? Right now, I'm not."

Rolaids, one-half pack of. Extra Strength. Fruit Flavor. Found on coffee table. Proves many Zen adages about the heavy significance of small, insignificant-looking things.
"I took mushrooms recently at Montauk, and I had insane heartburn," says Arthur. Montauk is a town in the Hamptons, on the very tony eastern tip of Long Island where wealthy New Yorkers keep summer houses. Martha Stewart lives in the Hamptons year-round. It should be noted that Arthur was not only in Montauk, but in Andy Warhol's old house in Montauk. Among the houseguests accompanying Arthur was Peter Beard, the artist and photographer who discovered Iman, the supermodel who's married to David Bowie. But back to the story.

"They were chocolate-covered mushrooms," says Arthur. "I started having visions of the apocalypse. I actually saw Satan. I saw thousands and thousands of tiny hands reaching out of my girlfriend's face. First we were in the bathtub, and all the hair on my arm was a little darker because it was wet and it turned into thousands of tiny veins. Then I could see inside my arm. I saw my arm decomposing. I just kept trying to shut it out. I turned the lights off and I kept seeing this big guy in the corner, and then I made [my girlfriend] turn the lights back on, but there was a melted face hanging on the doorknob. It turned out to be her underwear."

Arthur says the photo of his pensive-looking self on the back cover of *Redemption's Son* was taken in Montauk around this time. "That was a few minutes before I started seeing the apocalypse, actually."

Guitar, acoustic. Lowden flat-top. Thickly painted in bright greens, reds and yellows. Plastic-toy lizards and snakes are glued to the body. A compact disc covers the soundhole.
"This guitar is my mainstay," says Arthur. "It's the one I always play. It's been my guitar for four or five years. The CD in the soundhole is supposed to break the feedback when you amplify it."

Shortly after recording his debut album, Arthur spent two weeks in the studio developing a system of performing with two portable, pedal-operated samplers called Jam Mans. Developed in the '80s—and now discontinued—the Jam Man allows Arthur to tour cheaply as a solo artist and still present his songs with percussion and backup vocals. It isn't pre-programmed; Arthur creates the samples live. That is, he pounds out a beat on the body of his guitar with his fist or sings a vocal line that will be looped and played back.

"It's not canned," says Arthur. "There's a real element of gamble in it."

Mask, gas. Found in kitchen. Not military issue (only covers nose and mouth).
My first guess is that the mask was a cautionary item bought to filter out Trade Center dust. "It's for the paint fumes," says Arthur. "This one here [*points to painting above sink*] is all toxic house paint. In fact, this is a painting of the devil I saw (in Montauk). I fried my brain making a lot of these things because I don't have proper ventilation in here."

It's easy to hide inside a pop song; Arthur's canvases and sculptures aren't so adept at cloaking his inclination toward diametric imagery—devils and angels, sui-

cides and resurrections. Any wall space of significant size in Arthur's apartment has become a painting station. There's one in the kitchen, one in the entryway near the apartment door, one in his bedroom and one in the living room. Arthur's favorite piece of music to listen to is the 1998 self-titled solo record by Talk Talk's Mark Hollis. "It's minimal and depressing," says Arthur. "I love Brian Eno, too. I think about him a lot."

Arthur is a master of conjuring atmosphere in his songs by incorporating ambient sonic touches. This depth and dimension of sound isn't an easy thing for singer/songwriters to accomplish in a subtle manner; bells and electronic swooshes often sound forced or incongruent with guitar-and-voice constructions. Like many of you, perhaps, Arthur gets a little glassy-eyed when talking about My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless*, which is sort of the Handel's *Messiah* of shoegaze drone, guitar feedback and human drama. "It never gets old," says Arthur. "I can listen to it all the time. I still have no idea what's being said." MBV leader Kevin Shields, whom Arthur met recently at a festival in France (Shields was performing with Primal Scream), told him the key to *Loveless* was the tremolo bar. Arthur reaches toward one of his nearby guitars, spins the tremolo bar around with his hand and shrugs. We get around to talking about Beck's *Sea Change*, some of which Arthur has heard just the day before our interview. He asks my opinion of *Sea Change*. I don't say it, but I think it: With lyrics awash in *nouveau* sincerity and acoustic guitar chords couched in chamber fuzz and warm heartbeats, it sounds like Joseph Arthur's last record.

Answering machine. Outgoing message blares hip-hop music.
"That's Biggie," says Arthur. "You know Notorious B.I.G.?"
Yeah.

Answering-machine message. Content: The director of *Shrek 2* wants to schedule a conference call with Arthur tomorrow. Wants to license a song for the film's soundtrack.
"We're gonna talk about it," says Arthur sheepishly. "Did you see *Shrek 1*?"
Uh-huh.

Record album, psychedelic in appearance. Play at: 33 rpm. Title: *Around The World In A Day*.
"A lot of people call Prince nuts, but I really understand," says Arthur. "When you get locked into a record deal, you really start understanding why someone would write 'slave' on their face. Especially when you're a free spirit and an artist and just want to make something and have it released and have it sit in someone's office for eight years. Art and music shouldn't have to be perfected."

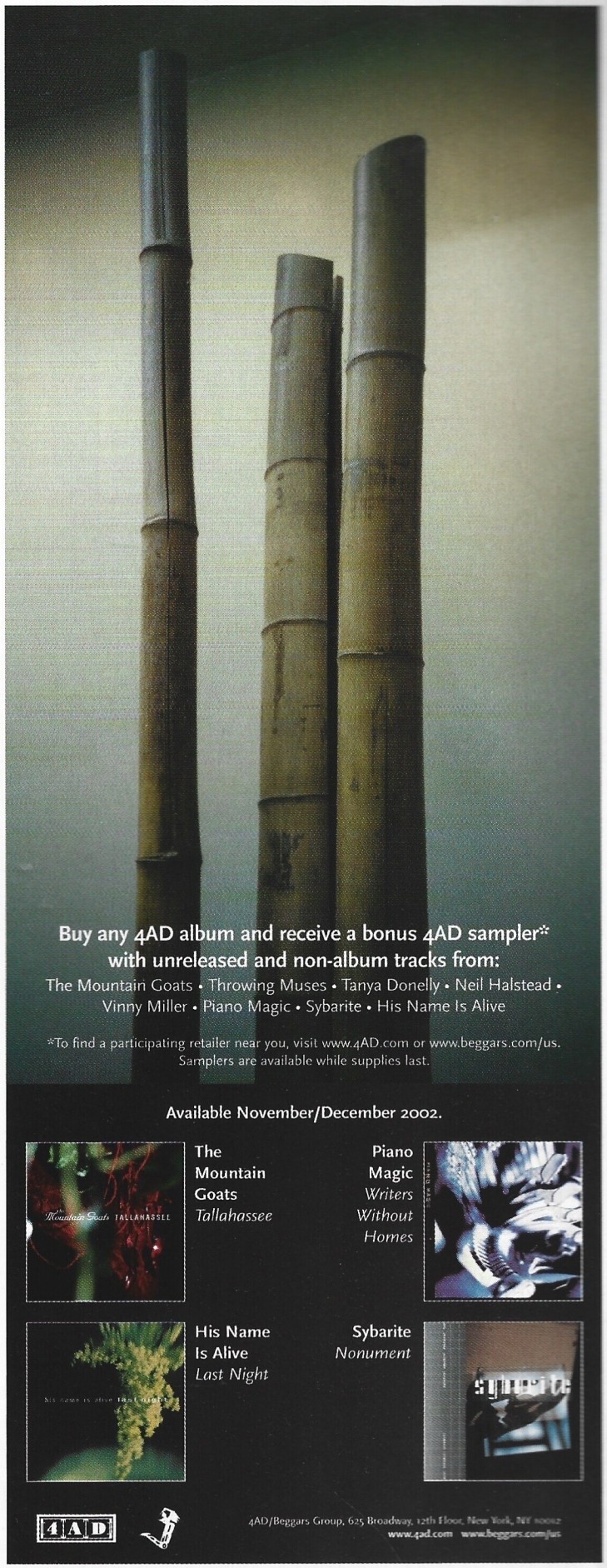
Arthur has recently been pursuing a full-band side project called Holding The Void. (Arthur hasn't always been a solo act; in Atlanta, he played in some unfortunately named bands: the slightly funky Ten Zen Men and the grunge-rock Bellybutton.) He's frustrated he can't release more music, and though he doesn't share any disparaging words for his record label or contract, he talks about freedom a lot.

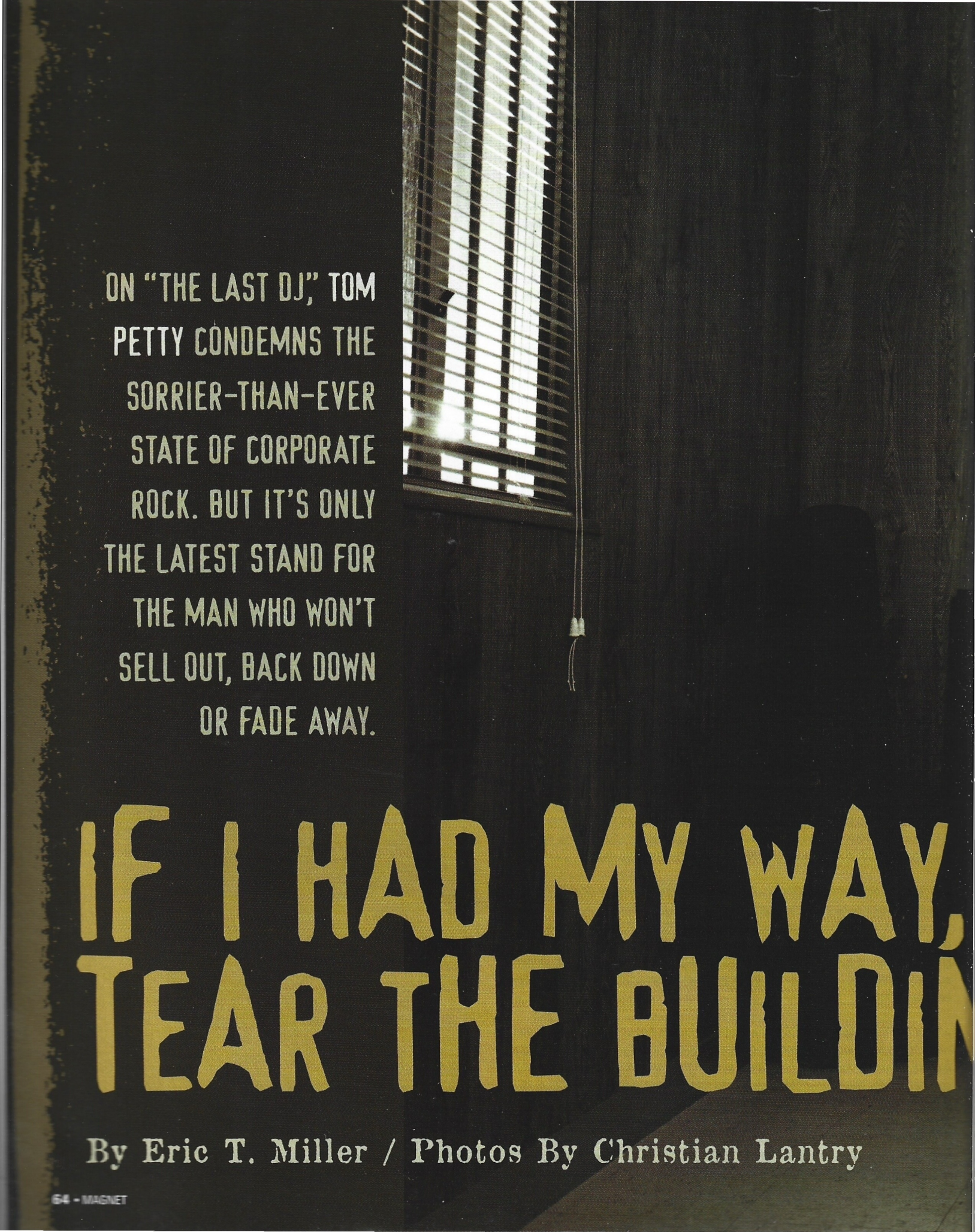
"I would like to get free of all record deals and license record by record," he says. "I have an electronic project I'm gonna call Stripper. I feel like I could make the ultimate music for strip clubs. It would have to be a very artsy strip club."

Birdcage, rickety-looking. Perhaps made of bamboo. Found near window. Inside the cage is a humanoid figure made of styrofoam, painted on each side.
"I found that on the street in the East Village," says Arthur. "The character in it is a trapped man, he's lying down. He's got two faces. He's a schizophrenic. As soon as I picked it up, some guy came up to me and said, 'Hey, that's my birdcage that I threw out two months ago.' He saw somebody else pick it up two months ago, and it came back to the street."

After a few hours spent plumbing the depths of Joseph Arthur's possessions, I still haven't got my man. He's funny and deeply serious, utterly relaxed and tightly wound, a hard thinker with a light attitude. Even the little guy in his birdcage has a split personality. We know where he lives and that he's searching for something and that he probably needs to get lost in order to find it. And now he's in the city where people recognize his music and art, and they pay attention to him.

"I love how anonymous New York is and I love how people don't pay attention to each other that much," he says. "There's a freedom. You can just be whatever character you want to be." **M**

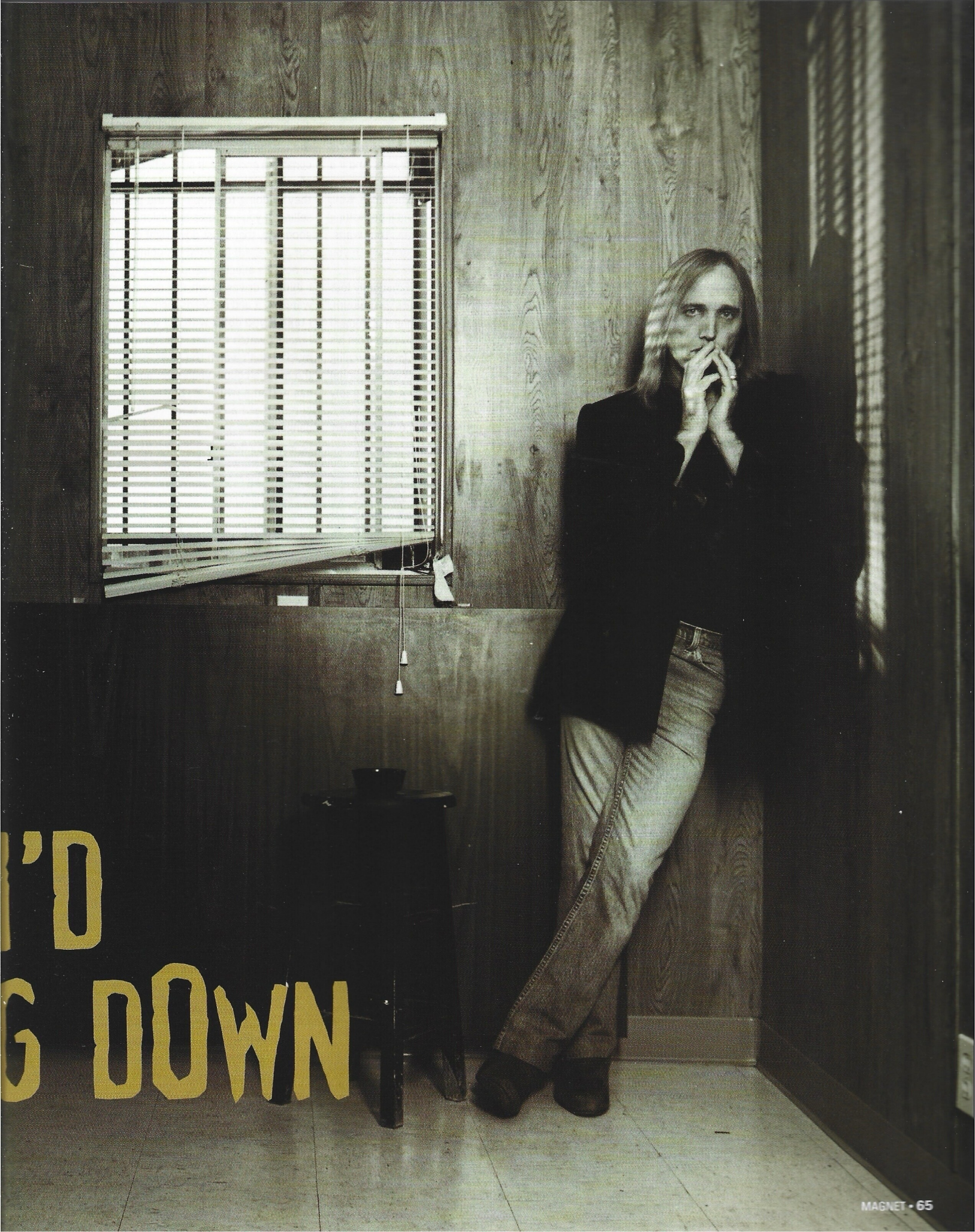




ON "THE LAST DJ," TOM PETTY CONDEMNS THE SORRIER-THAN-EVER STATE OF CORPORATE ROCK. BUT IT'S ONLY THE LATEST STAND FOR THE MAN WHO WON'T SELL OUT, BACK DOWN OR FADE AWAY.

IF I HAD MY WAY, TEAR THE BUILDI

By Eric T. Miller / Photos By Christian Lantry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G DOWN

What's *he* doing on the cover? Isn't this a magazine that's devoted the last decade to the beautiful losers and the edgy underdogs? Isn't he the guy who's sold more records than all of the bands that have ever been in MAGNET combined? Actually, Tom Petty fits rather nicely with what's covered in these pages, musically speaking. You can trace a fairly straight line back to his influences—Byrds, Dylan, Stones, Beatles, Beach Boys, Buffalo Springfield, the blues—and then continue drawing it forward to your favorite indie-rock band, too. The Strokes' "Last Nite"? Petty wrote it in 1976; he called it "American Girl." The only glaring difference between Petty and, say, Ryan Adams or Paul Westerberg or Steve Earle is 59 million records sold.

Not that we're trying to (or could) downsize Tom Petty so he'll fit into your expected reading material. There's nothing grassroots about having your star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame. Not much DIY in playing in a band with George Harrison, Bob Dylan and Roy Orbison or sharing the stage with Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash and Guns N' Roses. No struggle in hanging out with Johnny Depp, jamming at Al Gore's house, getting married by Little Richard or appearing in an episode of *The Simpsons*. No get-in-the van discomforts in a tour that grosses $25 million.

But Tom Petty is fighting, and he's a rebel who hasn't tempered his urge to bite the hand that feeds. On his latest album with the Heartbreakers, *The Last DJ*, Petty sings about how hard radio sucks ("There goes your freedom of choice/There goes the last human voice"), rock stars so bought-and-paid-for they couldn't sell out even if they wanted to ("All the music gave me was a craving for lite beer") and the vile relationship between record-company moguls and their puppet stars ("I'll make her look like a spoiled little bitch/She gets to be famous, I get to be rich"). We can salute that.

Of course, the very famous (and very rich) Tom Petty has released *The Last DJ* through the very behemoth Warner Bros. corporation. But that doesn't make his words any less true, and his calling-out of the music industry on this loose concept album is a working metaphor for a lot of things that don't get questioned much in America anymore. Two songs express concern for those coming of age in a society where violence is marketed as entertainment: the bluesy "When A Kid Goes Bad" ("Did we let you down?/Did you cry out for help and none was around?") and the Crazy Horse-like "Lost Children" ("Lord ... please shine some light down on all those travelin'/Lead them all home again"). "Dreamville" has Petty longing for a time when "all the trees were green ... the air smelled good" and "there was rock 'n' roll across the dial." If he weren't an icon, these sentiments would seem trite; if he were a younger artist, they would make no sense. Petty, now 52 years old, isn't a nostalgia act: He remembers rock 'n' roll's past, but maybe he sees its future, too. And if a subtle lyrical dig at U.S. environmental policy seems marginal to your pop-music listening experience, well, maybe you just don't get Tom Petty. He'll be waiting for you—standing alongside Bob Dylan, Tom Waits, Neil Young, Patti Smith and some others—when you come around.

The Last DJ's subject matter is of a markedly less personal nature than the Heartbreakers' last album, 1999's *Echo*. Written and recorded during a prolonged period of depression following Petty's divorce from his wife of 22 years, *Echo* is the sound of a man searching in vain for some sanity. It's a harrowing, emotional excavation; Petty's shot-to-hell voice gruesomely matches the words he sings: "Someone better hurry, I'm all alone ... No one ever taught me to be on my own/And I keep breaking down."

Despite *The Last DJ*'s railing against social injustice and crying out for moral reform, the album displays a sense of optimism *Echo* lacks. "Can't Stop The Sun," *DJ*'s psychedelic, Beatlesque closing track, proclaims, "You may take my money/You may turn off my microphone ... You may think you control things/But there'll be more just like me/Who won't give in." It's a typical Petty sentiment, one that's been firing his stubborn pugilist's blood over 25 years of work. He remains the underdog and the everyman—the loser who got lucky, the restless kid with one foot in the grave and one foot on the pedal, the self-made man who won't back down, the wild one running down a dream.

> "POPULAR MUSIC IS REALLY DEVOID OF AN ELEMENT OF TRUTH ... I THINK IT ACTUALLY DUMBS DOWN THE AUDIENCE AS THE GENERATIONS GO BY."

MAGNET: Why did you choose to address the issue of corporate greed now? Weren't companies—and people in general—just as greedy 20 years ago?

Petty: Actually, I think the level of greed has probably increased as the years have gone by. I don't know why exactly, but it just sort of crept into my brain that we are in a ludicrous time of corporate greed. The effects are becoming obvious, and I think it was time to say something about it.

Do you think the pursuit of making money is inherently a bad thing?

No. But I think the pursuit of making all the money there is is a bad thing.

Where do you draw the line?

I think you draw the line when you become immoral, like if you're earning money and it's hurting people. That's where you draw the line.

Give me an example.

Well, there are so many. When you had mom-and-pop stores, they had an obligation, they had to care about the customer and their product. As that becomes a corporate endeavor, it seems to me that there are lots of corporations that don't really care about the harm they're doing to people or the product that they're selling. If you just take television in general—that's a good one, that's just downright dangerous. It's without any regard for what it's doing or what it's saying or how it's affecting people. It's entirely money-driven. I think it drives down the morale of the audience watching it and demeans them at the same time.

I take it you don't watch a whole lot of TV.

I mainly watch movies. I'm not interested in the TV much. I don't watch the news, either. I quit watching the news a couple years ago, and my outlook on life has gotten a whole lot better. [*Laughs*] I'm just not bummed out all the time, you know? The news is dangerous, because in this country, it doesn't seem to be a very well-rounded report. I think other things go on in the world, too, that aren't necessarily so negative, and you need balance. They only dwell on the sensational. It just seems like they're trying to keep us scared to death all the time so we'll go and buy more shit.

You've never licensed a song for a commercial. Is there anything—money, a strong belief in a product, whatever else—that could make you change your mind?

[*Laughs*] I guess if I was broke. You know, if I had to feed my family or something. I've been lucky that I have never had to do it. I really have turned down—and sometimes I wonder if I'm stupid—many millions of dollars. And that's no exaggeration. I still turn down that kind of stuff all the time. But I can't do it, because I don't feel right about it. I think it hurts everything. It helped kill off rock 'n' roll in a big way. [Musicians] trivialized themselves to the point where they were trivial. I just don't want to see myself as a jingle writer. I take this stuff pretty seriously.

***The Last DJ* addresses what happens to art and music and books—and the quality thereof—when their mass dissemination becomes tightly controlled by corporate interests. In your mind, what's been made inferior?**

Look at popular music. It's really devoid of an element of truth for the most part. The music that exists out there that's more interesting and better and driven by some sense of honesty is placed in the back seat of what the audience is offered. It seems to me that if

the audience was offered a freer selection of music, they would probably respond to it. But it's frustrating to see the basest and most-common-denominator kind of stuff offered to them, and I think it actually dumbs down the audience as the generations go by.

Metaphorically speaking or not, all of the music-biz evils you single out on *The Last DJ*—radio, tours, record labels, etc.—have made you a very wealthy man. Did you have any internal conflicts in reconciling this fact?

No. All I've ever done is written songs and made records and done concerts. I don't think I've ever sold my soul or anything. I think I have avoided cashing in more than most of my peers.

So you don't think you've ever sold out?

If something didn't feel right, I just kind of veered away from it. It's a problem that the band still deals with to some degree. We work in a very mainstream arena, and it's not exactly the way we think or the music we make. We just happened to have a lot of hit records, you know? And that draws in a really big audience and a mainstream audience. But I'm still trying to draw the bow with a sense of independence and make the records I want to make. I don't think I ever tried to bow into being successful. We've been lucky in that sense and have certainly been aware of it, but we have never really tried to cash in on it.

You're in an interesting position: You're successful enough that you can do whatever you want, but the flip side is you're so successful that a hell of a lot of people are going to be watching and listening to everything you do.

Exactly. It's fascinating. With this record, what I was trying to do was make a really good record that was entertaining. Because the lyrics are so—I don't know what the word is, maybe provocative in some way—people are really caught up in the lyrics. And I rarely get to discuss what a good piece of music it is. [*Laughs*] I was looking at it also like, "Hey, the band is playing great; this is really good music." That's what I was trying to do. But the lyrics have sort of overtaken everything I'm asked about by people. It's funny, you know, because I'm only a guitar player. I really don't know all the answers to this stuff. [*Laughs*] I'm just raising the questions.

I think so many people identify with you because a lot of your songs are sung from the viewpoint of the loser or the underdog. Do you still think of yourself in that way?

[*Laughs*] Probably. I mean, we're never quite welcomed in *all* the way, but I think we enjoy that kind of picture of ourselves.

That reminds me of a story about Wilco from a few years ago. You're a Wilco fan, right?

Of course. I like Wilco a lot.

Wilco was nominated for a Grammy for *Mermaid Avenue*, the Woody Guthrie project they did with Billy Bragg, so they went to the ceremony. Jeff Tweedy grabbed a bunch of programs for the guys in the band to take home as souvenirs. He's standing there with the programs, waiting for his bandmates, and one of Puff Daddy's guys comes up and tries to take a program from Jeff, thinking he was an usher.

[*Laughs*] I've never even gone to the Grammys. I've won a few, but I've never shown up. I just can't see myself sitting through that. I was actually really honored when I won one—you feel good about that sort of thing—but I still couldn't make it down there. One year I was nominated for, like, five of them, and I still couldn't make myself go. I don't know why.

Conforming has never been an option for Petty, not even back in the lean years.

Before the Heartbreakers earned their reputation as flagship rockers for middle America, they were unknown and unloved across the land. The initial sales figures for the Heartbreakers' 1976 self-titled debut (released on the upstart Shelter label) were steady if modest, but the band wasn't making the big splash the ambitious Petty had hoped for. After touring the album into the ground in America, the Heartbreakers took their act to England. It was 1977—the coming-out year for the Sex Pistols, Clash and Elvis Costello—and amid all the clamor and confusion and rebel poses (the debut's cover features Petty smirking in a leather jacket with bullets across his chest; a sleeve photo has the black-clad band toting guns), punk rock was counting Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers as its own. Being lumped in with the punks and new wavers overseas had the effect Petty desired—album sales spiked back home—but the association would be short-lived. Petty didn't want to be the Ramones; he wanted to be the Rolling Stones, and he thus distanced himself from the in-crowd to pursue long-term goals of widespread popularity. Besides, what did a kid from Gainesville, Fla.,

care about anarchy in the U.K.?

Integrity has never meshed well with commercial success in the pop-music arena, and with the exception of Neil Young, nobody at the "massive" level has retained Petty's measure of independence. He has never allowed his music to be used in ads and in 1987 successfully sued tire company B.F. Goodrich for using a song that sounded suspiciously like Petty. He doesn't accept corporate sponsorship for his tours or allow VIP seating sections, yet his ticket prices are consistently lower than those of his peers. When you consider that the music of self-described anti-establishment bands like the Clash and Sex Pistols is regularly used to peddle products and that political-mouthpiece groups such as Bad Religion have been part of corporate-financed tours, Petty's business decisions seem almost puritan.

"IF RECORDS WERE NINE BUCKS, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE PEOPLE STEALING THEM OVER THE COMPUTERS."

Two events early in his career taught Petty how to go toe-to-toe with the music business. When the Heartbreakers' second album, *You're Going To Get It*, was certified gold only two months after its release in 1978, Petty seemed poised for stardom. But the roof caved in less than a year later when Shelter Records was bought by MCA. Petty claimed his contract (which was something of a joke, royalty- and publishing-wise) was voided when Shelter shut down; MCA disagreed. And so began Petty's first stand. He sued MCA to be released from his contract, while the label brass threatened to issue his unfinished master tapes as an album and further maintained that he owed them $500,000. MCA finally blinked when Petty pulled his trick shot: He filed for bankruptcy, leaving the label nothing to collect. Back at the bargaining table, Petty revised his contract, assumed ownership of his publishing and was given an equitable royalty rate. In the aftermath of his small victory, a parade of artists marched out of the music industry's feudalist past and renegotiated their own deals.

Two years later, Petty was back at war with MCA, this time over the retail price of *Hard Promises*. Following the massive success of 1979's *Damn The Torpedos*, the label decided stores should sell *Hard Promises* for $9.98, a dollar more than the standard at the time. Petty seethed when he found out and refused to deliver the album; he threatened to title it *$8.98* unless MCA changed its mind. The label gave in, and David had again slayed Goliath.

MAGNET: You won those battles with MCA, but do you think that, for artists in general, the war has been lost?

Petty: No. I'm a little bit optimistic. Things are better than they used to be to some degree. The record-price thing, it whipped me mentally for a couple years after that. I kind of felt like "I'm fighting this fight, and no one is helping me." [*Laughs*] Nobody ever threw in with me or anything. The press was very helpful. But I do think it really helped keep the cost of records down for a long time. I have the luxury now of looking back at the industry and saying, "If you had listened to me, you wouldn't be in the mess that you're in." If records were nine bucks, you wouldn't have people stealing them over the computers. People would want to buy them. But you see the industry really paying the price of making the product so elite.

One thing you said back then was, "If we're not careful, records are going to end up costing $20," which at the time seemed like a ridiculously high price. At MAGNET, we get sent review copies of just about every record released, but one we didn't get was the last Dylan record. So I gave an intern $20 and said, "Can you go to the record store around the corner and buy it?" She came back with the CD and the change—and the change was only 74 cents. I asked her, "What did you do with the rest of the money?"

[*Laughs*] It's sad. I think that will change, I really do. I think they're going to have to come to that realization. At some point, I realized that there's not much I can do about it. I could bitch about it, but I don't want to just constantly bitch in the press. There's a lot more to my personality than just bitching about the music industry. Actually, I'm so removed from the music business that I try to never let it into my life, but I am aware of it. It's ironic to me that I wrote this much about it, because it's not something I really dwell on that much. Not anymore. I just cherish playing music. I don't want to get caught up in all the other stuff.

Have you ever considered eliminating the middle man by self-releasing your records?

I consider it a lot lately. I think it could be done. I still owe a number of records to Warner Bros., but when I'm out of this deal, I think I will go independent. I would really like to release a lot more records than I do. We record a *lot* of stuff. I'm old enough to remember the days when the Beatles would put out three records a year. It wasn't uncommon to get a new album from them every three or four months. I think we could do that. I saw this thing kind of creep into the music business of the time between releases getting longer and longer. Now they don't even want you to put one out but every two years. That's stupid. Life is too short. [*Laughs*] I've got a lot of music I want to make. If I could go independent and get into a situation where I can release records—I wish I could have my Warner Bros. records and my independent records. You know, just release "side" records or

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whatever you want to call them.

Are you aware of what's going on with independent music?

[*Laughs*] I don't know. Not really, I don't think. But I like that idea much better because it reminds me of the early days of rock 'n' roll when there were a lot of independent labels, and they were actually driven by people who liked music. They were music people, not lawyers or accountants or whatever you have running the music business now. The labels themselves had an individual taste to them. It was really fun and exciting. Like you would have the Specialty label that would have Little Richard and Larry Williams and that kind of thing. Or Stax; when it first started, it had that nice Southern flavor to it. I miss all that.

Back then and with indie labels now—though not as much so as 10 years ago—you could walk into a store and think, "I like this band and this band, and I see that this label puts them both out, so I can take a chance that this other band I've never heard of on that label would probably be something I like."

Imagine that. [*Laughs*] "I trust this label. Most of their stuff is good." That kind of thinking disappeared, and I don't know why.

Have you spoken to any DJs to see what they think about *The Last DJ* and that song in particular?

Yeah, I've spoken with a few who really like it. Many have thanked me for it. But that's an old story; it's not a new story. The music went out of the hands of the DJs many years ago. I thought it was a good metaphor for the little freedoms we have that are constantly vanishing. It just felt like a good metaphor. There's just not that many people left who can say what they want in any kind of public place.

How much power should a commercial DJ have?

It would be great if DJs were actually hired on a sense of musical taste and knowledge, as well as being able to perform or whatever it is they do. There was a time when the DJ was selecting records and was interested in it and hunted down good records to play to his audience. Radio at its best is an artform, and in America, it has really been treated badly.

The majority of the bands covered in MAGNET are only played on college radio, where the DJs pick what they play and it still has that freeform feel to some extent.

That's great. I don't know why people think the audience won't respond to music that is picked just because it's something someone likes and they're spinning it. I'm a fan of any music that's done well. I'm not as segregated as the radio is, where you have to go to a certain channel to hear a certain kind of thing.

You've said that in the old days, you would love a lot of these DJs, but some, you would just hate. But you'd still listen, because, "Hey, I hate this guy!"

Yeah. [*Laughs*] "I can't stand him. I can't believe he's playing *that*." But nevertheless, they were people who entertained you.

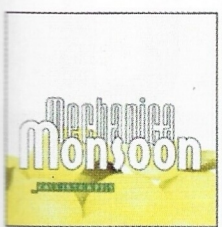
Despite the fact that the music you've made over the past decade has been, in my opinion, your best, each album has sold less than the previous one and you're not played on the radio nearly as much as you were.

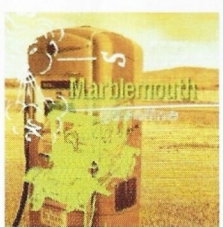
Yeah, it's sad.

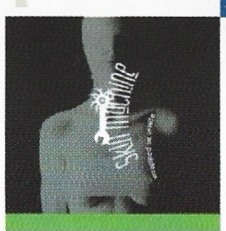
Did it have anything to do with the subject matter of the new album?

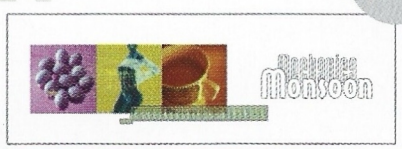
No. I try not to think about it much, but it is depressing. I would like to sell those huge numbers like we used to, but I think that it's a very hard fit for the mass audience today. What we do is getting more and more specialized into our little world. But then again, the records do sell enough that I'm not *really* disappointed. [*Laughs*] And if they

(continued on page 122)









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Sondre Lerche

DOORWAY TO NORWAY

Watered-down domestic sounds leaving you chilly? Warm up to the microbrewed pop, rural electro and urban folk imported from Norway: Röyksopp, Sondre Lerche, St. Thomas and Erlend Øye.

BY TIZZY ASHER

A window in Bergen, Norway, looks out on rain more than 300 days a year. A bus leaving the western-coast city must navigate 297 miles of mountainous countryside and transfer its passengers to a ferry so they can reach Oslo, the capital city, which is located on the eastern seaboard. Until recently, if Bergen's 220,000 inhabitants craved new music, they had two options: turn on the radio (which only occasionally broadcast homegrown talent like synth-pop heroes a-ha) or make it themselves.

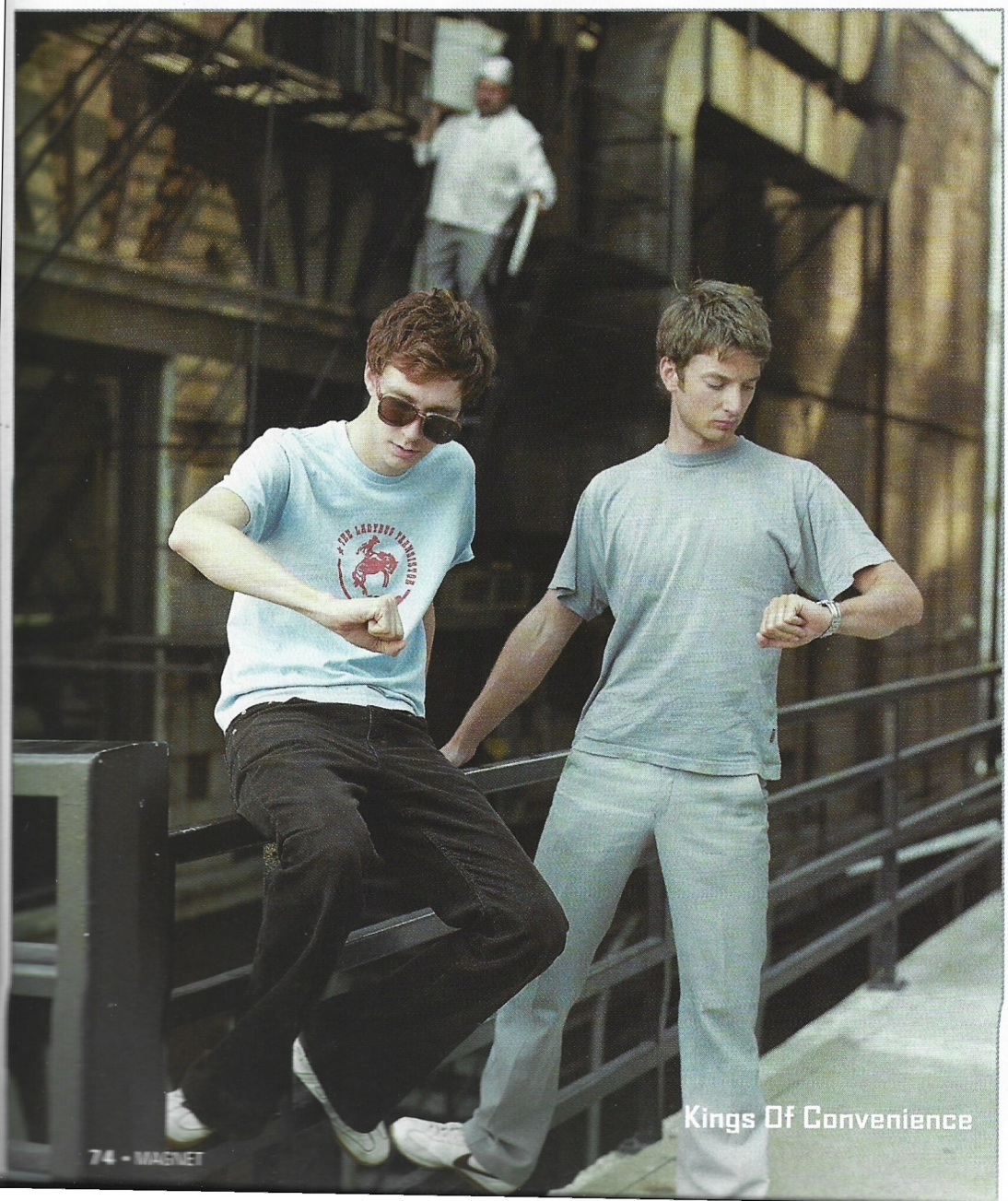
"In Bergen, we were self-contained," says Erlend Øye. "We had to be. There were no record companies there."

Øye and Erik Glambek Bøe are the acoustic-pop duo Kings Of Convenience, whose 2001 debut, *Quiet Is The New Loud*, put Bergen on the map.

"The people were making music in Bergen because they wanted to hear it," says Øye. "No one really thought they were going to make money off it. It was mostly about people cooking soup at home, letting it stay on the stove. After three days, it was pretty tasty. It's all coming out now just because it's been so long that anyone has ever tapped into that source. It's been able to blossom for a long time and get a real identity."

Quiet Is The New Loud brought a renewed sense of dignity and grace to soft pop, dragging it away from the twee posturing of bands like Belle And Sebastian and back toward classic folk music. With its crystalline harmonies, gently picked guitars and lovelorn lyrics, *Quiet* was almost chic, but not quite. Øye and Bøe chose not to tamper with their formula, even though indie kids in the U.S. and Britain initially balked at the Simon & Garfunkel-style vocal interplay and unironic, campfire-singalong intimacy.

It's this subtle self-confidence and self-reliance that make the Bergen songwriters so appealing. The dusty, melancholic St. Thomas (whose sophomore full-length, *I'm Coming Home*, has outsold Kings Of Convenience in Norway), the young and preternaturally sophisticated Sondre Lerche and the downbeat electronic duo Röyksopp, along with labels like New Records (a small local imprint that specializes in singer/songwriters), are all releasing music tempered by Norway's relatively undisturbed identity. While Swedish bands like the Hives, Hellacopters, Division Of Laura Lee and Sahara Hotnights rattle the global foundation with noisy guitar rock, the progeny of Bergen seems content to encourage massive, worldwide introspection.



Kings Of Convenience

Sondre Lerche: Home Boy

Sondre Lerche is the sort of self-assured young man you want to hate on principle alone. At 20 years old, he's already established himself on his country's pop charts with his 2001 debut, *Faces Down* (recently issued in the U.S. by Astralwerks). Along with an ear for instantly hummable melodies, Lerche is blessed with an edgy voice that hovers between David Bowie and Nick Drake—and the sort of blue eyes that can pierce your heart. He successfully incorporates an impressive breadth of styles; hints of Brazilian pop nestle against Beatles harmonies without seeming contrived or saccharine. Lerche is almost too perfect a poster child for Bergen, beaming out like the smug little brother in a John Hughes film.

"Growing up in Bergen, Norway and Norwegian music has been a big reference," says Lerche. "When I was 10, 11, 12 years old and just starting to play the guitar and just starting to discover music that I liked, I paid a lot of attention to the local music that happened in Bergen. I kept an eye on everything, because I thought everything was interesting. I played local pubs and jam sessions when I was 13, 14 years old, and I watched all the older musicians; some of them were good and some of them obviously had nothing good to bring. You see what you want to be and what you don't want to be mirrored in your local town."

Lerche may be one of the few songwriters championing both Prefab Sprout and Burt Bacharach, but he's still heavily swayed by the music of his hometown. With help from producer H.P. Gundersen (the founder of Bergen band Tweeterfriendly Music), Lerche fleshed out *Faces Down*'s skeletal folk songs with layers of strings and orchestral flourishes. Sean O'Hagan of the High Llamas helped with some arrangements, as did several local musicians who frequent the studio where Lerche works. In recent months, he's been recording a follow-up to *Faces Down* with more members of the Bergen talent pool, including songwriter/composer Julian Berentzen (whose debut was recently released on New Records).

"We have this very tight, strong family of artists and musicians and people who contribute musically or personally to each other," says Lerche. "People that I identify with and people that I feel related to and hang out with. It's mainly just because you share an attitude and a vision in the music. Bergen's a small town, but there are lots of musicians here. There are lots of groups and small musical families. I have my gang, and there are quite a few other gangs. Some of them I totally disagree with musically, because we have different approaches. I tend to stick to my people and not be bothered."

*Allowing yourself to become submerged in one par*ticular scene can be dangerous, however, and Lerche isn't oblivious to the pitfalls of living in a close-knit city. His newfound celebrity hasn't gone to his head, though he knows it could potentially taint everything he touch-

es. He also understands that by limiting himself to one group of musicians, the inspiration could fizzle.

"With an album out in countries as far as the U.S., it's quite a strange situation," he says. "I don't know how to cope with it except for just realizing and remembering every day what you're doing. And that's a struggle. Trying to maintain focus on the music, the songwriting and your musical integrity so you don't lose yourself because of success or demand or failure or whatever."

Erlend Øye: Conspiring To Create International Noise

While Lerche finds inspiration at the calm center of the Bergen scene, Erlend Øye perceives the city as a place where it's far too easy to lose focus. Ever since the Kings Of Convenience shot to number one on the Norwegian charts with *Quiet Is The New Loud* and "Toxic Girl" became a modest hit single in England, Øye has felt bound and gagged by the windswept coast of his hometown.

"It's such a small place, you become 'this guy from this band,'" says Øye from his current residence in Berlin. "It becomes so tiring, and it's a little bit too easy. You get a lot of pats on the back. Here in Berlin, I'm just left alone. I find that's a better situation to write music in—more empty space and less obligation. [In Bergen], I was just getting a little too confident about my own situation."

Despite the comic distraction of his oversized eyeglasses, Øye has a face that radiates confidence. He seems able to reject Bergen's attention simply because he knows he can catch it back any time he needs it. He readily volunteers his move to Germany was motivated by economics as much as artistic integrity; Berlin is cheap and has an international airport, which was critical to the creation of Øye's recent solo debut, *Unrest* (Astralwerks/Source).

St. Thomas

"I TEND TO STICK TO MY PEOPLE AND NOT BE BOTHERED." —SONDRE LERCHE

For *Unrest*, Øye traveled to the studios of 10 different electronic artists—including Atlanta's Prefuse 73, New York's Soviet, Finland's Mr. Velcro Fastener and Italy's Jolly Music—to create smooth, melody-based electronica that slides from cosmopolitan disco to downtempo loops and beats. "I ended up always seeing these great electronic bands and meeting these people I could never work with," he says, "because Kings Of Convenience, we are an acoustic band. I think it's good, it should stay that way. That's why I came up with the idea of making one song with many different people. Then you go to all these different places, and you're only there a couple of days. You get inspired by it."

Except for the cottony vocals, it's difficult to recognize *Unrest* as Øye's work. It's as if he left his former self behind in Bergen, neatly folded and stored with the reindeer sweaters and snow boots. He misses writing songs with Bøe and says he's hoping to come back to the Kings Of Convenience after Bøe has recovered from the band's recent U.S. tour. ("Erik didn't cope with it so well," Øye explains gingerly. "His body didn't react well to travel.")

While the Kings Of Convenience have been able to operate with sovereignty, Øye is discovering he's unable to escape the politics of the record industry as a solo artist; before the release of *Unrest*, he was informed by his label that two more "hits" needed to be added to it.

"Were [Kings Of Convenience] on the pop charts?" muses Øye. "I don't know. We were number one in Norway, but that's just because it's a very small country, and when anyone from Norway gets talked about in England or America, then it's big news ... The same (record company) guys are saying, 'You have to make two more hits!' This guy said we had to do all this work to put strings on 'Toxic Girl' and it would be a hit—and it wasn't a hit. So why worry? Why *Quiet* has done well is not because of the hits on it; it's because it's an album that has a consistency."

When told that *Unrest* does indeed have a consistent vibe, Øye's response darts back like a snake's tongue: "Would you mind calling my record label?"

St. Thomas: A Character In Search Of A Country Song

As Øye notes, it isn't difficult to achieve fame in Norway, where word travels fast. But for Thomas Hansen, the singer/songwriter who records with a posse of musicians under the handle St. Thomas, seeing his name on the pop charts isn't something he'd discount so easily. Hansen seems to cultivate a sense of alienation and sadness wherever he goes—as if he were desperately trying to prove himself to his homeland. A former postal employee from Oslo, Hansen has had mixed feelings about Bergen since he moved there in 1998.

"I have a tense relationship to Kings Of Convenience, especially because this guy Erlend, with the glasses, he said to me five years ago that I would never have a record deal," says Hansen, who also happens to be living in Berlin at the moment. "We were in the same scene. We hung out in the same places in Bergen. He was always bragging about how successful they were and how big they were going to be. He was very brutal to me. I still remember it, and I'm a little bitter."

Hansen can gloat over the success of his second record, 2001's *I'm Coming Home* (released in the U.S. on Misra); the album has gone gold (10,000 copies in Norway), which means roughly one in every 500 Norwegians owns a copy. Though it's difficult to imagine Hansen's strained Neil Young vocals and backwoodsy instrumentation blaring from that many stereos, his

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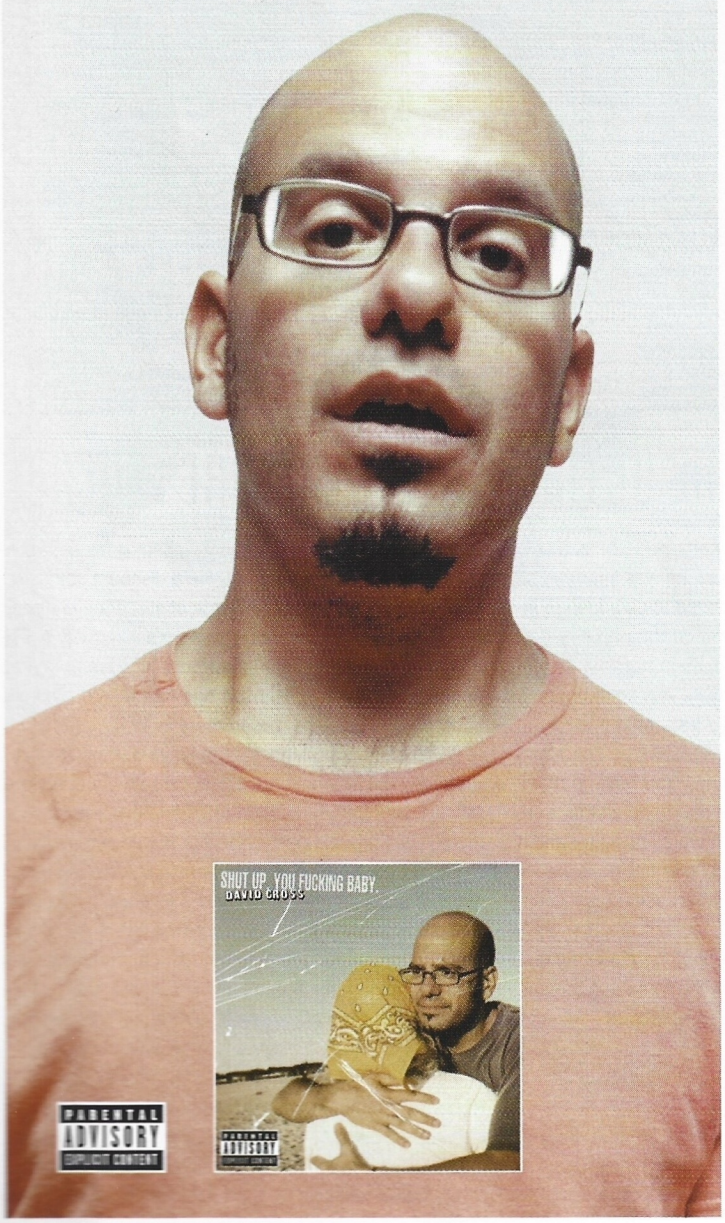


"I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE AN OUTSIDER, LIKE I HAD SO MUCH IN MY HEART BUT NEVER DARED TO SPEAK OUT LOUD." —THOMAS HANSEN

despondent anthems have touched a nerve with audiences and critics. Hansen, however, receives little recognition from his fellow Norwegian musicians. (Tellingly, Lerche and Øye are quick to mention other local bands whose music they appreciate and enjoy, but St. Thomas is noticeably absent.)

The Hansen who seems measured and deliberate with words in conversation is a stark contrast to the volatile personality he often displays onstage. He's been known to walk out in the middle of performances, verbally abuse his band and find other erratic ways of expressing his discontent. At a gig last spring at London's Royal Albert Hall, he berated the promoters for not treating his band fairly. Via posts on his Web site (www.lamestain.com), Hansen openly details his less-than-healthy mental state and indicates he'll move to Sweden to live with his parents and receive psychiatric treatment.

Röyksopp

"I like to be brutally honest," says Hansen. "That's my ambition—to go as far as possible being honest. Maybe it's a little bit naive, but it's gone well so far. I think it's good to talk about things like this instead of trying to hide like I'm someone else. It's easier now also that I have a chance to talk about it. I've always been quiet and sitting alone in the back of the room and not daring to raise my hand. Now I have a deal where I can say exactly what I want."

Over the last year, Hansen has ensconced himself in the American music scene, having recently toured with members of Neutral Milk Hotel as his backing band; he's also spent the past few months in a Nashville studio recording the follow-up to *I'm Coming Home* (tentatively titled *Hey, Harmony*) with Giant Sand's Howe Gelb and members of Lambchop and Bablicon. Nevertheless, it's the Norwegian audiences that Hansen wants to impress. "I've always felt like an outsider, like I had so much in my heart but never dared to speak out loud," he says. "It's a good feeling to be onstage, and people are showing enthusiasm also. They are sympathizing."

Röyksopp: Bridge To The Northern Lights

One drawback to success is, of course, the loss of privacy, and the antics of even the most unassuming rock stars are fair game for gossip columns in Norwegian newspapers. ("They blow up everything you do in Norway," seethes Hansen.) But for Röyksopp's Svein Berge and Torbjorn Brundtland, the fact that someone would go to such lengths to create and sell stories about them is incredible.

"I actually read somewhere in a trendy, fashionable newspaper in Norway that [Röyksopp] had been to a party in Oslo, and we were really drunk," says Berge. "And supposedly, we found some X-rated movies in a cupboard and put them on and started masturbating. This was supposed to have happened in 1999, and I didn't spend a single second in Olso that year."

Since the success of Röyksopp's debut, *Melody A.M.*, in 2001 (it was recently released in the U.S. on Astralwerks), Berge and Brundtland have stared with wide-eyed amazement at what happens when small-town boys move to the city and release a hit record. Berge is amused our interview is being conducted via cellphone from the open deck of a boat somewhere between Finland and Sweden; the ferry is shuttling Röyksopp to its next stop on a European tour with Moby.

Brundtland and Berge began playing music together in 1991 as teenagers in Tromsø, a sleepy village in northern Norway whose only other notable musical export was late-'80s atmospheric-pop group Bel Canto. Essentially bored country boys with raging hormones, the pair raided the local shops for electronic items to experiment with. "Ambient music was what we were making at that point," says Berge. "That might be just a result of the spacious environment that Tromsø has. During winter, you have the stars in the sky and the northern lights and all that. It sounds a bit pretentious and a bit ... " Berge trails off into laughter, obviously embarrassed.

Brundtland and Berge arrived in Bergen in 1997, just as groups like Air were beginning to realize refined forms of dance music. The smooth, cinematic funk of *Melody A.M.* homes in on the urban-hipster side of electronica—nightclubs, massive PA systems, drugs—but retains a rural inspiration. "The location of Bergen, it's a bit more of a pit than Tromsø," says Berge. "You don't have that much scenery—the mountains and so on. In our music, you can find some of the spacious qualities inherited from living in Tromsø."

Along with the obvious dancefloor savvy, there are moments on *Melody A.M.* that seem to stretch into scenic infinity. Seven-minute epic "Röyksopp's Night Out" has a series of recurring melodies that pop up each time the song seems ready to conclude. "Poor Leno," with its chorused vocals and driving house rhythm, sounds like something Apple might use to sell computers.

Berge is just about to launch into a detailed explanation of how Röyksopp's tight beats and programming are what keep the duo from wandering into ambient obscurity when our phone line begins to go fuzzy. The last thing I hear before the line goes dead is his laughter, as if it were the funniest thing in the world that even the cellphone connection is at the mercy of the Scandinavian seas.

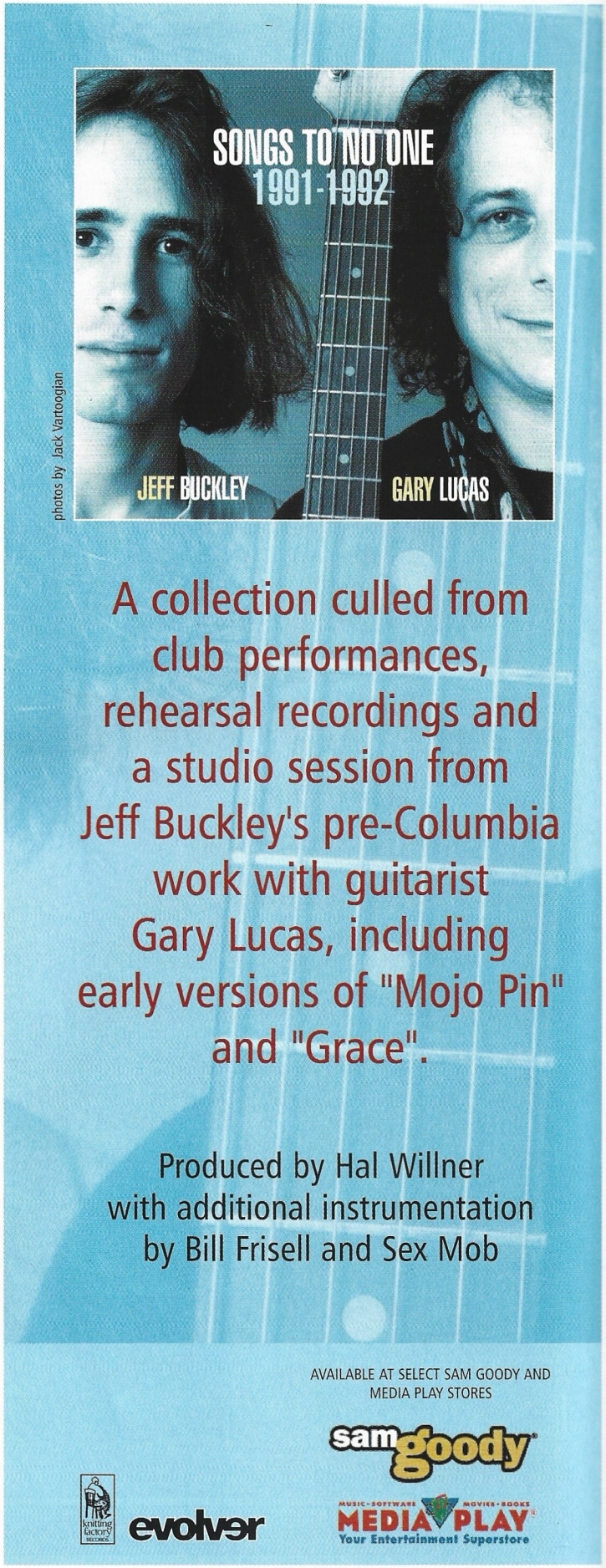
UNLESS THE EUROPEAN MAINLAND SINKS INTO THE ATLANTIC, NORWAY WILL never be the next Paris, Manchester or Berlin. Most likely, it will just continue being Norway, with its fjords and fish. In Bergen, the rain will continue to fall most of the time. But it's safe to assume that in the next year, the city's music scene may experience drastic change.

"There's certainly the potential for a lot of discussion about Norway, at least in the media," says Phil Thomas, who runs Misra Records. "There is a possibility that Norwegian bands will end up on American labels. But I hope that anyone who signs a Norwegian band isn't counting on Norway to do it for them."

Errol Kolosine, general manager of Astralwerks, agrees that Bergen is probably due for an influx of A&R types looking to sign their own Kings Of Convenience, Röyksopp, Sondre Lerche or St. Thomas. But as to whether that will change the chemistry of the town, he places the responsibility squarely on the scene's participants. "It depends on how much ridiculousness takes place," says Kolosine. "A scene can be suffocated and put under pressure—young bands get signed that aren't ready. But at the end of the day, if the leaders of a scene make the right choices, the scene can avoid being destroyed."

Øye is skeptical of Bergen's ability to survive any sort of publicity blitz. "For [a scene] to happen, you have to be left alone for a long time," he says. "If someone is talented and they write a song, if they live in a city, they might get picked up long before they finish their musical journey—before they reach where they want to go. They get picked up by people who say, 'Oh, you have to work with this guy,' and then the natural development stops. This might be what's happening in Norway now. The people who could have been doing something really special get picked up too early and start worrying about how to sell records and how to live out of doing music."

When asked if he worries about the hype affecting artists like Lerche, however, Øye laughs. "I think Sondre has a healthy approach to everything," he says. "I actually have very good faith in him. I've seen him play on the piano, just singing, and he's really good. If he can go do that, that's really what matters." **M**



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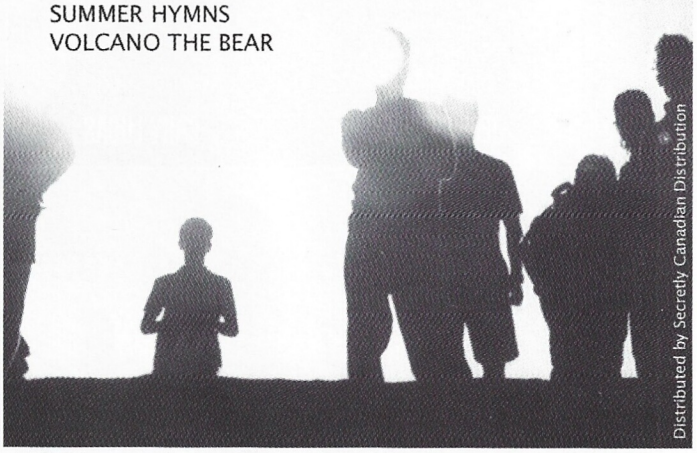

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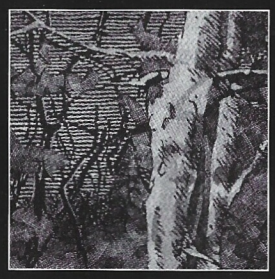

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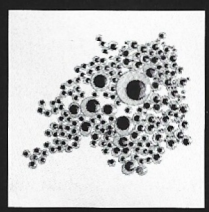

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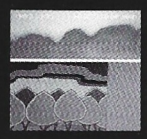

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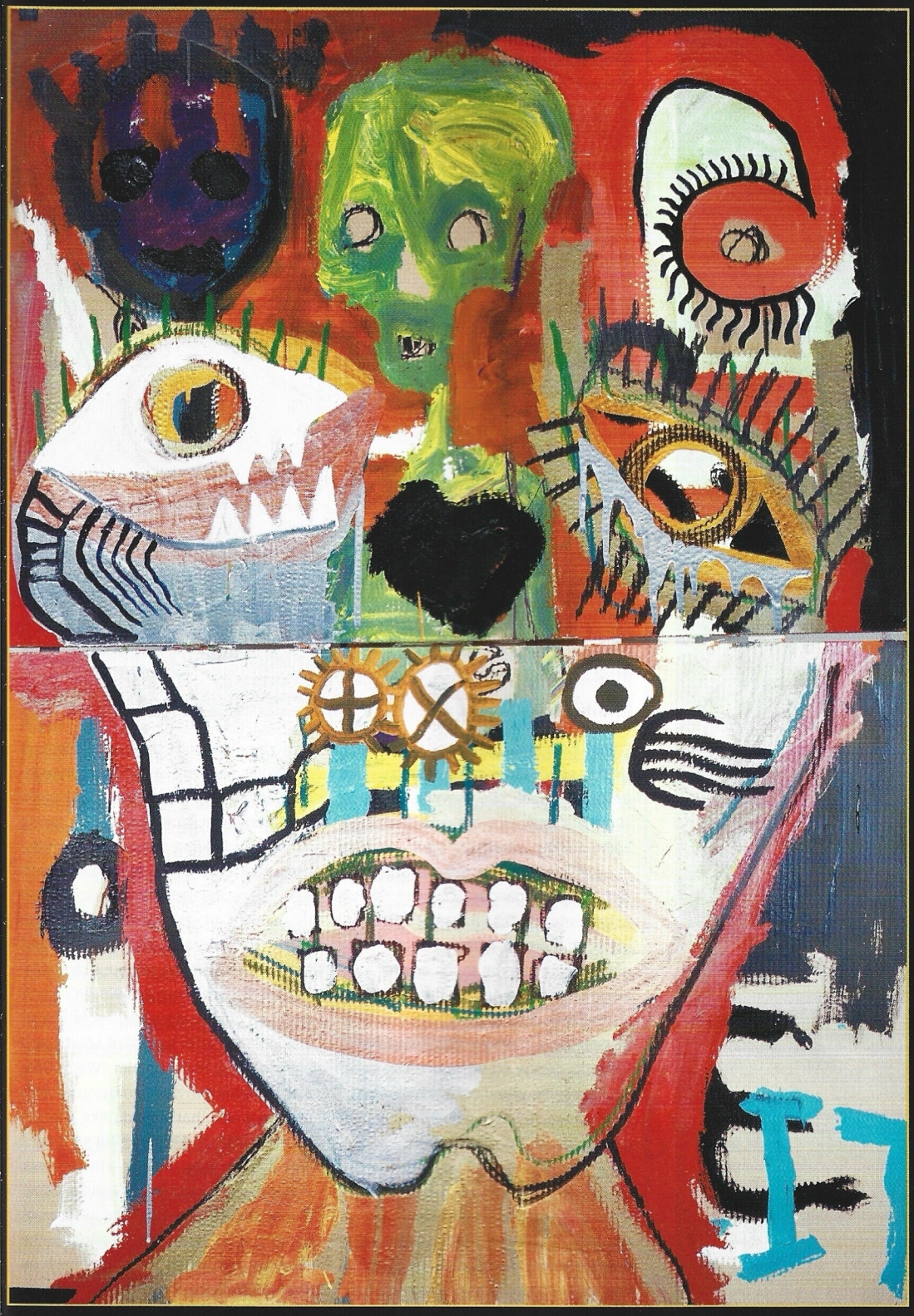

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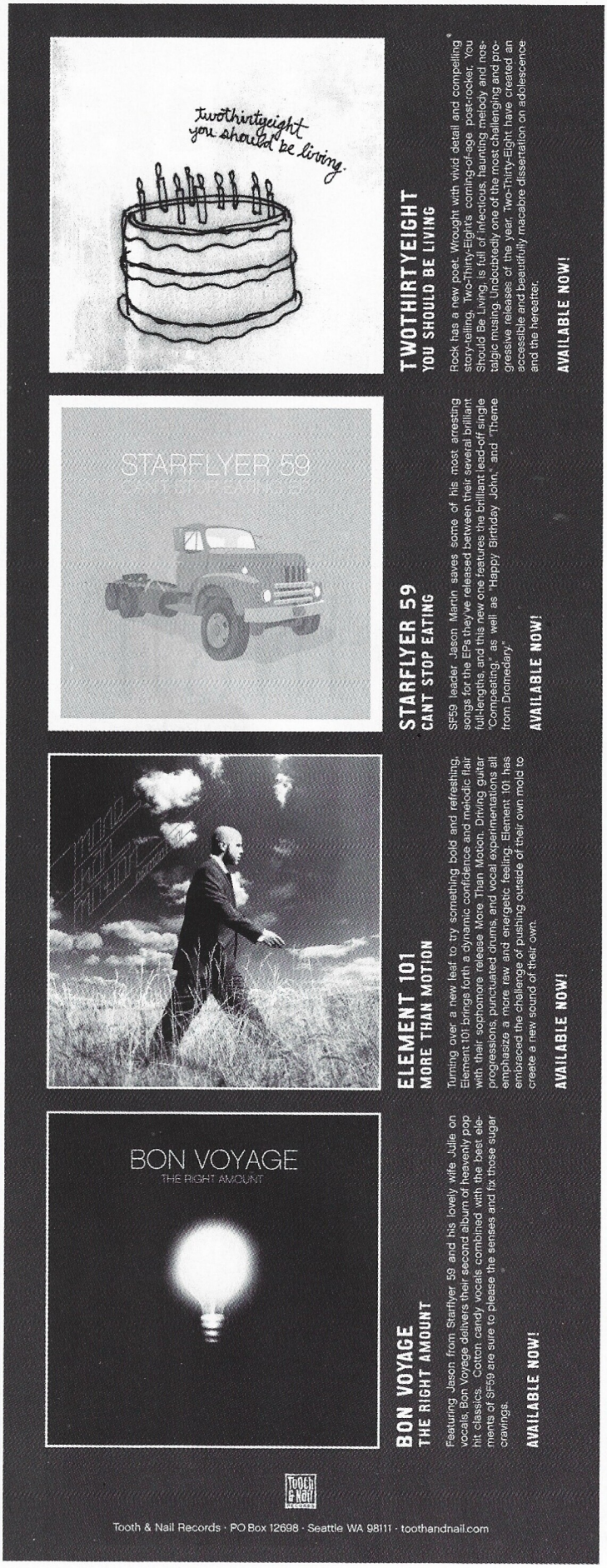


A HAWK AND A HACKSAW
A Hawk And A Hacksaw

INSTRUMENTS
Billions Of Phonographs

Although the Elephant 6 collective has officially trudged off to the pachyderm's graveyard, the remnants soldier on like New Testament prophets preaching to a dwindling flock. Does anybody still care? After exploring Albert Ayler-tinged dissonance with Bablicon, former Neutral Milk Hotel drummer Jeremy Barnes has switched to piano for his one-man project, A Hawk And A Hacksaw. "Romceasca" inflates obscure Kinks single "Berkeley Mews" into a grainy, after-hours Victorian music-hall rehearsal. "A Hard Row To Hoe" begins like a scatter-brained soundbite from a *Tom And Jerry* cartoon, then morphs into a swirling Bulgarian folk dance. "Cotton Woods" could be the accompaniment to a three-legged race at a Sunday picnic in Cajun country. This is curiously addictive stuff, though probably too wacky (and not moody enough) for use as film soundtrack.

Cellist Heather McIntosh (also of Japancakes) spearheads an outfit whose supernatural instrumentals make movie work seem almost inevitable. McIntosh—whose occasional singing has a pleasant, Joni Mitchell-like sheen—is the focal point of the Instruments, a loose-knit group that includes Neutral Milkmen Jeff Mangum, Julian Koster and Scott Spillane; Will Hart and John Fernandes from Olivia Tremor Control; and Elf Power's Laura Carter. Most of McIntosh's best songs could be filed under "Klezmer For Funerals" if such a category existed. "When The Stars Shine" is an acid-laced Kool-Aid anthem, worthy of widescreen mindscrapers like Cerberus Shoal. The hypnotic, swaying "Carnival" may seal a movie deal; it's a spine-chilling waltz featuring Koster's musical saw as perfect graveyard counterpoint to Fernandes' weeping clarinet and McIntosh's cello in a ghostly reshaping of Nino Rota's *Godfather* score. While nothing here lives up to the original four-alarm buzz of the Apples, the Olivias and Neutral Milk, both these albums prove the E6 peat fire is nowhere near extinguished. **[Cloud, www.cloudrecordings.com; Orange Twin, www.orangetwin.com]**

—Jud Cost

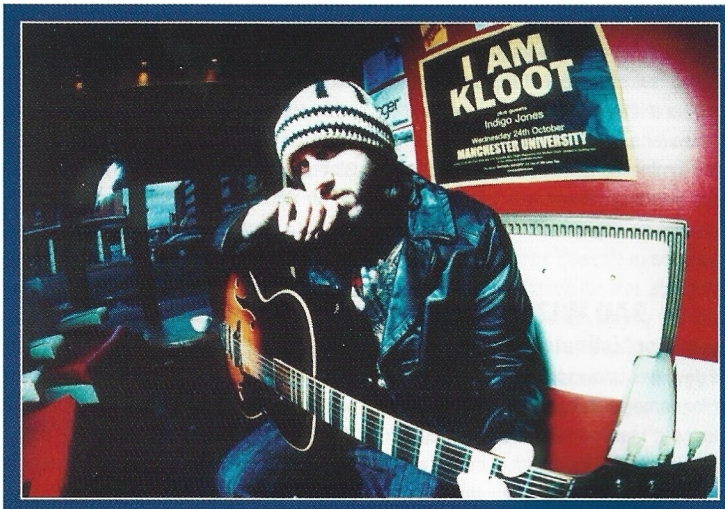
ADD N TO (X)
Loud Like Nature

Burundi drumming. Big guitars. Kim Fowley. International trio Add N To (X) has surely moved beyond the throbbing, gristly kitsch of its cartoon-injected early work and into mature, hard pop. Like a white De La Soul, ANTX has put more absolute terror in its loop-de-looped techno ("P.P. Machine"), more twinkle in its Erik Satie still lifes ("Pink Light"), more flutes and flightiness in its sexy lounge vibes ("Up The Punks") and more funky air in its overall ambient drone than ever before. *Loud Like Nature* is wiftier and angrier, taking its electro more serious than anyone in Berliniamsburg ever could. If you've got the nerve (and age) to want to hear deathless L.A. scenester Fowley fouling up a perfectly good creepy-guitar track ("Invasion Of The Polaroid People"), you're either a genius or too young to know what you're getting yourself into. But before you start screaming "my baby done grown up," shuffle through this deck. No sooner do you nestle in ANTX's claustrophobic electro psychedelia than you find the group still has some chipper silliness under its collective tight-belt. Like, what's that Robert Plant soundalike doing in the middle of the militaristic squoosh of "Party Bag"? Is Dr. Who really alive and well on "Total All Out Water"? And isn't there an overall vibe of kid's-TV theme songs to its honking, rubbery bounciness? If ANTX's first efforts were its teething stage, *Loud* is the sound of a band losing its baby teeth. **[Mute, www.mute.com]**

—A.D. Amorosi

DOT ALLISON
We Are Science

With *We Are Science*, Scottish singer Dot Allison goes from space to Space Invaders. Following the cult success of One Dove, her early-'90s group with techno svengali Andrew Weatherall, Allison's 1999 solo debut *Afterglow* saw her taking slow-yet-bounding steps over luminescent terra firma like an astronaut collecting moonrocks. Her ethereal voice defied the weight of gear-heavy production thanks to low-gravity arrangements and melodies easily found without a slide rule. *We Are Science*'s splashdown isn't a soft landing. Allison grounds herself with diskloads of sci-fi keyboard squibs and belching bass lines. Opener "We're Only Science" grinds to a self-consciously retro rhythm track that sounds like Giorgio Moroder convening the Apollo 11 crew's post-mission quarantine on a by-the-hour motel's vibrating bed. Allison's coos, moans and spoken-sung admonishments get lost in the hum. She's a ghost in the machine; unfortunately, the machine is an Atari 2600. "Substance" likewise strands



BADLY DRAWN BOY
HAVE YOU FED THE FISH?

Damon Gough's 2000 debut, *The Hour Of Bewilderbeast*, found fans in every corner with its mixture of unkempt indie rock and stately pop. Classic melodies met an experimental spirit, battle was done and everybody won. The curious little British man with the beard and knit hat retreated to write a sophomore set, but Hollywood came calling and Gough's second album became 1.5: the soundtrack to *About A Boy*. Not surprisingly, given its context, *Boy* ditched *Bewilderbeast*'s weirdness for more straight-ahead pop. *Have You Fed The Fish?* follows suit. Gough's heightened confidence and experience will doubtless turn off fans wooed by his kitchen-sink eccentricities, much of which he's traded in for greater clarity. As a whole, *Fish* is nowhere near as strong and complete as *Bewilderbeast*, but its best moments burn just as brightly. On the pop-culture fever dream "You Were Right," Gough questions his own importance in the grand scheme ("Songs are never quite the answer"), and what could've become a hackneyed tribute to dead heroes (he namechecks Sinatra, Buckley, Cobain and Lennon) becomes a down-to-earth love manifesto. Along with the terrific "How?" ("How can I give you the answers you need/When all I have is a melody?"), it forms the crux of an album about the reconciliation of pop life and real life. These grand moments allow a couple of concessions to convention (the bad '60s-funk jam "Using Our Feet") to be ignored in favor of the vibrant, complete picture. **[ARTISTdirect, www.artistdirectrecords.com]**

—Josh Modell

Allison's allure in the arcade with music that's, at best, a winking parody of those "this is what rock will sound like in the future" space-bar scenes from various late-'70s Glen A. Larson TV productions. Only "Performance," "Lover" and "Wishing Stone" pump oxygen into the vacuum, substituting live instruments for the Casio clutter and lifting *Science* above its remix-record vibe. For those few minutes, Allison is more than a guest on her own album. **[Mantra/Beggars Banquet, www.beggars.com]**

—Scott Wilson

ALUMINUM GROUP
Happyness

There remains a place in the 21st-century lexicon for the word "suave," and John and Frank Navin have kept us apprised of its evolution since the late 1980s. If the Aluminum Group has somehow failed to attain the critical acclaim of Belle And Sebastian or Stereolab—let alone anything like the popularity of Rufus Wainwright—it can nonetheless lay legitimate claim to carrying the torch for serious fans of Burt Bacharach while pressing a Tortoise-like production aesthetic several leagues closer to populist pop. In fact, *Happyness* could be a Tortoise record with vocals. That band's John Herndon (drums, percussion), John McEntire (electronics, mixing) and Doug McCombs (bass) are the studio players, augmented by Chicago Underground Duo cornetist Rob Mazurek and indie utility diva Rebecca Gates. The Navin brothers weave all that synth-ing and intellectual wit into a stylish and very now (or is it vintage?) tuxedo with their cascading ooh-la-la harmonies and rainbow vocal treatments. *Happyness* reins in the more contrived experimentation of 2000's *Pelo* and keeps it in service to a collection that

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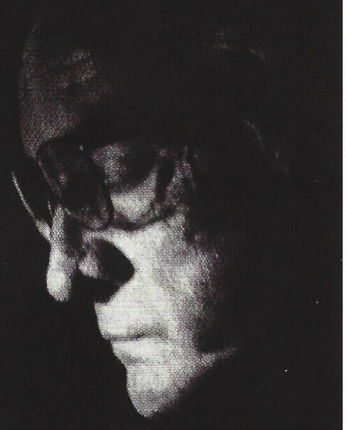

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ranks with the Aluminum Group's most listenable, memorable and dreamy pop songs. I'll take romance, the Navins seem to say, and if there's grit in life beyond the studio walls, well, that's the source of these luminescent pearls. **[Wishing Tree, www.wishingtreerecords.com]**

—Linda Ray

BAD WIZARD
Sophisticated Mouth

The devil went down to Georgia, was looking for some souls to steal. He knew that below the Mason-Dixon line, God-fearin' folks will still turn badder than Leroy Brown if the hemp's sweet, the moonshine's strong and the stereo's got Zep, Deep Purple, Kiss, Thin Lizzy and Blue Cheer. He also figured that Bad Wizard was—judging by its name—halfway to hell already. Indeed, Bad Wizard's follow-up to 2001's *Free And Easy* bears all the hallmarks, from the nut-busting, cowbell-thwacking AC/DCisms of "Black Cherry" and the squeeze-me/tease-me sleaze-riffing of "Soft, Warm And Wet" to the Purplish guitar/keyboard jam of "Needle 2 Groove" and its prog-metal accomplice, a cover of Uriah Heep's "Love Machine." There's more '70s boogie per capita herein than is allowed in states with Sunday blue laws still on the books. (Request Bad Wizard's "Champagne Boogie" next time you hit the titty bars.) So anyway, the devil sauntered up to the band, grinned the grin of a shark and wagered that he could outboogie 'em longer, harder and louder, until they collapsed and pleaded with him to play some Elliott Smith or Cat Power. Snarled vocalist Curtis Brown to the devil, in a voice uncannily similar to the late Bon Scott's: "We'll take that bet, you sonafabitch, we're the best that's ever been." **[Tee Pee, www.teepeerecords.com]**

—Fred Mills

DEVENDRA BANHART
Oh Me Oh My...

Devendra Banhart has a warbly-yet-warm voice that sounds like a thick slab of dusty old vinyl spinning on a poorly calibrated turntable. His songs are filled with more than enough non-sequiturs and cartoon nihilism ("I'm burying your head in a bed of swords") to color him a loose screw beyond compare. He uses the incidental tape hiss of a four-track recorder as a backdrop for his voice and finger-plucked acoustic guitar. The 21-year-old singer/songwriter writes such beautifully crackpot songs that there will no doubt be a cult of like-minded souls hanging on his every line about "white-ass suits" and "lion tattoos" one day. For musical precedents, think the folkie Marc Bolan, Daniel Johnston and Syd Barrett at his most dour. For spiritual precedent, think Crispin Glover's infamous *Letterman* appearance. *Oh Me Oh My...* proves Banhart is a prolific troubadour (22 songs ranging in length from 39 seconds to 4:30) seriously fucking shit up with his fragile fairy tales, accidental spirituals, warped glam blues and even the odd love song. "Roots (If The Sky Were A Stone)" is Banhart's very spooky explanation of nature's way, while on "Michigan State" (probably the most Bolan-esque of the bunch), he busts a chuckle at his own stream of consciousness. If you could write songs this freakily enticing, you'd be laughing, too. **[Young God, www.younggodrecords.com]**

—Patrick Berkery

MC PAUL BARMAN
Paullelujah!

MC TRACHIOTOMY
...W/Love From Tahiti

From the Garden State to the Crescent City, from the self-effacing neurosis of the *Jew Dork Times* to the dilapidated madness of New Orleans' ninth ward, come these two contrary rappers who, in their own purposefully irritating ways, put the honk in honky. *Paullelujah!*, MC Paul Barman's first album, re-enlists Prince Paul (who produced his smarmy debut EP, 2000's *It's Very Stimulating*) and continues to show why he's easily the whitest rapper on the planet. Bach samples, boasts of rhyming atop John Cage and a Dylan parody guaranteed to have once gotten him gonged by Nipsey Russell ride self-consciously over "rhythms" Prince Paul might've edited from *Partridge Family* outtakes. Barman's sexual boasts, especially on "Cock Monster," are the poetry of a man steeped in pop culture and pulp porn who hasn't gotten any pussy in five years. Or at least that's what this rappin' Woody Allen would have us believe. Barman is annoyingly informed, deliberately obnoxious and ultimately expendable.

No less difficult is MC Trachiotomoy's latest. On *...W/Love From Tahiti*, intentional low fidelity is wrapped around beats most likely supplied by labelmate Mr. Quintron and his homemade Drum Buddy. Trachiotomoy sounds like Tom Waits, coming on Barry White-like over dirt-spackled cassettes of local soul bands that never made it. Words are slurred and dragged like a skittish dog being yanked by his owner for a walk. This is baby-

makin' music, but only if you're trapped in a motel with a garage door for an entrance, vinyl sheets, cracked wall mirrors and that mouth breather you always hated in high school. If the members of Faust were held at gunpoint and told to get funky, it might sound like this. Nevertheless, *...W/Love From Tahiti*, like cockroaches, carp and briars, will be around long after this tired planet has been bombed back to the basics. **[Coup D'Etat, www.coupdetat.tv; Bulb, www.bulbrecords.com]**

—Bruce Miller

BEATIFICS
The Way We Never Were

From their name to the gooey sumptuousness of their music to the shelf full of references only power-pop nerds would know, the Beatifics hold dear the tuneful triumphs of mid-'60s celestial songwriting with an equal dose of indie quirkiness. While the overwhelming Eric Carmen-like croon of "Different Stars" and the anthemic tendencies of "Sorry Yesterdays" make it tempting to label these pudding-haired practitioners of neo-Merseybeat a modern-day equivalent of the Raspberries, there's also a playful pranksterism at work here that recalls Teenage Fanclub or the Olivia Tremor Control at its most Beatlesque. Like Velvet Crush, the Beatifics are perfectly comfortable with chiming, mid-tempo rockers that reach for the stars with soaring melodic precision. It's equal parts Byrds, Beatles and Beach Boys but not devoid of late-'70s Brit new-wave influences like the Soft Boys, XTC, Elvis Costello and Squeeze, either. In this sense, the Beatifics aren't that far from the Figgs but with fewer pointy-toed tendencies. The inevitable Big Star and Cheap Trick comparisons arise on the brilliant "Between The Lines," which, with its buoyant bridge—the Beatifics' specialty—recalls the heyday of early-'70s AM radio (which was the last time commercial radio was listenable). Think Todd Rundgren, Badfinger, 10cc. And then think about nominating *The Way We Never Were* album of the year. (All votes for the Pattern considered, of course.) **[Bus Stop, www.busstoplabel.com]**

—Joe S. Harrington

BROKEBACK
Looks At The Bird

Douglas McCombs can't seem to get away from collaboration. He's a key member of Eleventh Dream Day and Tortoise, bands that forge distinctive sounds from disparate strong personalities. Brokeback was originally an instrumental showcase for the bold, twangy melodies he plays on six-string Fender bass, but on *Looks At The Bird*, the band's other member (Chicago Underground Quartet bassist Noel Kupersmith) emerges as an equal partner. McCombs doesn't exactly submerge his personality; it takes about two seconds to know it's him playing the stark, echoing leads on "Everywhere Down Here" and "The Suspension Bridge At Iguazú Falls." But he's the featured soloist rather than the whole show on "Lupé" and "The Wind-Up Bird," which are arranged by Kupersmith and prominently feature his light, glitch-speckled electronics. In a Brokeback first, former Stereolab vocalist Mary Hansen ditches her trademark oohs and aahs to sing the slight, nursery rhyme-like lyrics of the closing "Pearl's Dream." In another, McCombs plays electric guitar on several tunes; he sounds remarkably like Tom Verlaine on "Everywhere Down Here" and "In The Reeds." By balancing novelty with familiarity, McCombs has perfected the juggling act that's at the heart of collaboration. **[Thrill Jockey, www.thrilljockey.com]**

—Bill Meyer

CHARLENE
Charlene

Charlene sounds like a lot of my favorite bands happening all at once. Which isn't surprising, since playing what we call "space rock" and/or "dream pop" and making it sound different than anyone else playing such music is fairly impossible. That said, this Boston trio does an OK job. The affectations the band has snagged from like-minded peers and predecessors (My Bloody Valentine) are clearly visible, but the way Charlene fucks 'em up a bit is right clever. Think a more sluggish New Order with a whiskey hangover ("Ripoff"), Love And Rockets in a much better mood ("Cathode"), Galaxie 500 but both intelligible and hummable ("Shoot Yr. Life") or Neil Halstead's as-yet-unformed 39th Slowdive spin-off band (entire album). Oh, and one song ("Shot Down") sounds eerily like Death Cab For Cutie with Kevin Shields on guitar. Weird. The point is, just because it's been done before doesn't mean it's being done badly. Black Rebel Motorcycle Club takes shit for sounding like the Jesus And Mary Chain and Interpol for sounding like Joy Division, but people still buy their records. **[SharkAttack!, www.sharkattackmusic.com]**

—Beth Wawerna

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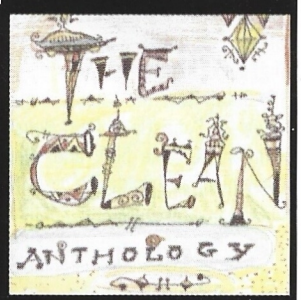

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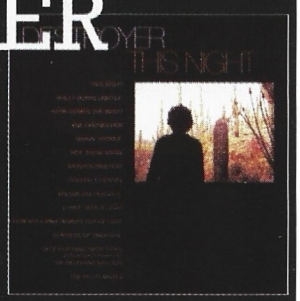

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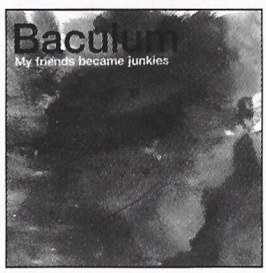

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>> PREVIEW NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS

NOCTURAMA (ANTI-/EPITAPH), OUT FEBRUARY 11

Happiness has found Nick Cave. *Nocturama*—his debut on Anti-, home of cranky, imagery-laden comrades Merle Haggard and Tom Waits—sees Cave ditching his coterie of ranting religious punters, hangdog murderers and elegiac junkies for something resembling emotional bliss and contentment. Some of his tainted souls make lyrical appearances (as do Bill Gates, wigged judges and the like), but they all stand in line to proclaim Cave's love to an unseen vision of loveliness: a female totem as big and symbolic as the mighty moors in *Wuthering Heights*. Aided by the mournful gypsy wail of violinist Warren Ellis and stalwart guitarists Blixa Bargeld and Mick Harvey, Cave brings his sly prose to shifting seasons of love ("She Passed By My Window"), mad, honest desire ("He Wants You") and ceaseless devotion ("Rock Of Gibraltar") in downtempo tones. Cave's agile piano and atmospheric Hammond-organ fills makes "Wonderful Life" sexy, sure and almost sacred. With the exception of two noisy tunes ("Bring It On" and "Babe, I'm On Fire"), *Nocturama* is inhabited by a moody, noirish calm.

MAGNET caught Cave just waking on a Saturday morning in Manhattan, trying to collect his thoughts.

What made you sign with Anti- at this point in your career?

We've always made an independent label our home in London with Mute. It just seemed that Epitaph really liked us. [*Laughs*] I know that sounds strange, but we'd been passed around from major label to major label during our tenure in America and had very little stake in them or very little say, very little faith, in their strategies. Epitaph is clued into things. The majors seem to have about as much [sense] as a grapefruit.

I know you don't necessarily use themes or overriding concepts on your albums, but there is a particular vibe and focus to *Nocturama*.

I know what you mean about the focus, but I'm not sure about the whys and whens. I do and did the same thing I've done for years, which is go into an office and write. I'm already working on the next album. It's just what I do—write songs every day. I work away there. Some of it is me sitting there dreaming, some tearing my hair out.

But in a world obsessed with imminent doom, you've chosen to focus on romantic love with a formidable female presence. You're married, but I wouldn't assume your wife is the single lyrical totem you ascribe to.

Well, yes. She is a formidable woman, I must say. [*Laughs*] But it's more than that. I am married. And marriage is—much in the same way that my work is—a bowing out from the world. Shutting down the windows, locking the doors. We're both incredibly private people—she more than I. I find a need to go and work more and more, more intense all the time. The worse a state the world gets in, the more it needs me to go do that. The only way that I've been able to deal, successfully, with the world is to abstain from it, paradoxically—escaping to an imaginary world, which is what my records have always been, anyway. They're not particularly autobiographical, though what I'm writing is certainly influenced by the way things are.

Speaking of the way things are, you've always used America as a lyrical and musical touchstone. Here, though, with the exception of the roll call on the epic "Babe, I'm On Fire," there's almost nothing "American" on *Nocturama*. Have you given up on us?

[*Laughs*] I thought you had given up on me. Are you trying to say that there's less American influence on the record? I mean, the phrase "bring it on" is truly an American one.

There's just a certain melancholy, guided by the piano as lead instrument—and I know that you've used that before—but it all goes back to this being a more focused work. Quite frankly, it feels like an English garden.

I'm fascinated that you're saying that, really. It hadn't occurred to me. I don't know if I'm thoroughly convinced with your argument. I mean, there's quite a tough rock feel that goes with "Babe" and "Bring It On." To me, they have a solid production, which is very American. All my influences are still American. But I guess as I become more of a homebody, I like England more. It's not as if I like the British people more, particularly. But I do like the cultural weight of England and the English, the way they do things, actually. I now live on the English seaside, and when I say that, I do mean incredibly English. I'm talking pebbled beaches and manicured lawns. I love all this stuff.

I wonder if you feel like the last truly literate songwriter out there. There are writers I once admired who now either rely on old tricks or mere cleverness to see themselves through. You've never let down the weight of your own literacy.

It's the most important thing in the world for me—to write. I say that, knowing that I have a wife and I've got children and all of this sort of thing. But if I don't have the writing, everything else falls apart. I know that from experience. So it's something that I need to do, and I take it with incredible, utter seriousness. It's easy to let things slide. I know that feeling where you say, "That'll do." Or, "This is good enough." Or, "This is better than most of the shit you'll read or hear, so ... " Those are the sorts of little arguments that go through your head all the time when you're writing songs or anything else. I really simply try to push against that, to always push beyond the "that'll do" so that there isn't a "that's all right." I have to work on each song until it reaches its full potential. I have a writer's work ethic; I don't have a rock musician's work ethic. They, as we know, are the laziest lot—the biggest ingrates you'll ever find. **[www.anti.com]**

—A.D. Amorosi

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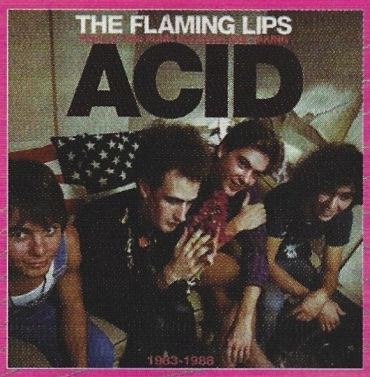

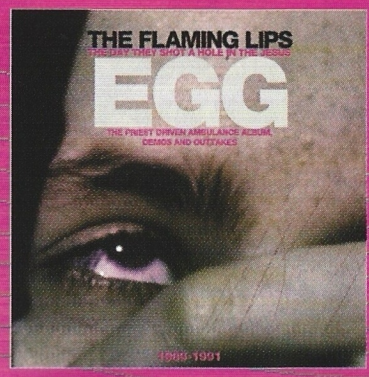

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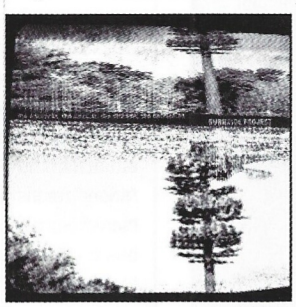

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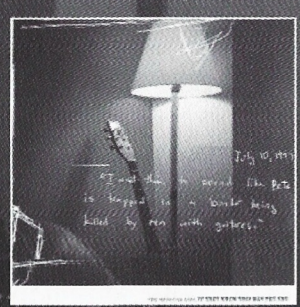

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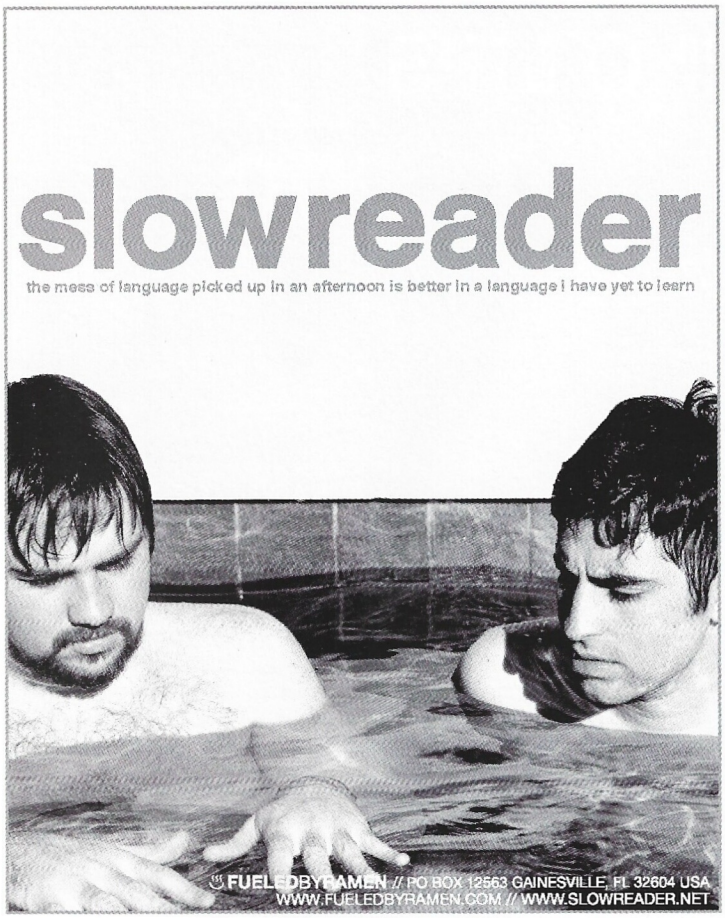

JOHN CUNNINGHAM
Happy-Go-Unlucky

Judging from the staccato piano pulses and soft, vulnerable tones in which John Cunningham sings the opening "Losing Myself Too," you'd think the British pop-smith is probably more of a Paul than a John guy in all matters Beatles. But further exploration suggests Cunningham embraces the whole enchilada equally: the smartly acidic guitar work of George, the clumsy drum fills of Ringo, the black comedy in John's lyrics and the vaudevillian/chamber-pop flourishes of producer George Martin. Yes, Cunningham is a chip off the old Fab block; his best Beatles nick is the stinging instrumental coda of "Can't Get Used To This," which sounds like "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" had it been written and recorded circa *Revolver*. Just don't expect one of those sad-sack revisionists who comes across like so much phony Beatlemania. There's depth on *Happy-Go-Unlucky*, from the daisy-glaze feel and Bacharachian breakdowns of "Here It Is" to the sobering realization that there's no cheating Father Time ("It Goes On"). These 10 songs are certainly a familiar potpourri (Emitt Rhodes, and, to a lesser degree, Elliott Smith will come to mind), but their familiarity breeds extreme contentment rather than contempt. One of the best pure pop records of 2002. **[Parasol, www.parasol.com]**

—Patrick Berkery

FIGGS
Slow Charm

It's been 15 years since the Figgs first fell from the tree, and their self-professed slow charm is growing on an audience starved for their melodic, bare-bones approach. Upon scaling down to a three-piece around the time of 1996's *Banda Macho*, this upstate New York staple—which, at this point, is second only to NRBQ in those parts—ditched its pub-rock sound and took on a more auto-crank approach. The essence of tight and harmonious, the Figgs are also versatile: "Soon," for instance, pairs howling Robert Plant exorcisms with the noodly keyboards from Sugarloaf's "Green Eyed Lady" for maximum effect (and also to reinforce the fact these guys, who still sport cute Beatle haircuts, are actually geezers). The Figgs' real forte is evoking the springing-out-of-its-breeches exuberance of late-'70s new wave/power pop (itself an evocation of Merseybeat, anyway). Although we mocked it then, in retrospect, it's evident that era was over far too quickly. Costello-isms haunt "The Trench" and "Slow Charm," but it's the Elvis of Clover as opposed to the Attractions. Skittering rhythms dominate the English Beat-via-Feelies "Static," while "Metal Detector" combines the Who with new-wave bleeps that put the Faint to shame. Time and again, these guys get the knack. **[Earsmile, www.earsmile.com]**

—Joe S. Harrington

FLAMING SIDEBURNS
Save Rock 'N' Roll

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll no doubt encounter the so-called "Rock Is Back" notion, and as you ponder the relative merits of such '02 high-profilers as the Strokes, Hives and Vines, it probably wouldn't hurt to turn your attention also to some of those lesser-knowns that have been tirelessly treading the boards for some time now with flame-throwing aplomb. Case in point: Finland's Flaming Sideburns, whose second album (their first in the U.S.) is a white-hot slab easily the equal of the aforementioned kingpins. There's enough Stooges/Stones/MC5 worship on display to leave kneeprints on the doorstep of the Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame: "Loose My Soul" is a rousing "Search And Destroy" rip, "Blow The Roof" serves up a subway trainful of maraca-shaking androgyny, "Street Survivor" gives poor ol' jumpin'-jack Flash new instructions on how to kick out the jams and "Flowers" (featuring guests from Soundtrack Of Our Lives) will take your ofay ass up to Harlem to cop. The band also detours into spaghetti surf, horn-fried Memphis blues and psychedelic folk rock, but for the most part, *Save Rock 'N' Roll* is a 38-minute, hi-octane, viscera-churning romp. Observed one astute reviewer of the album, "Någon kanske känner igen gruppen från white thrash soul!" Damn, I couldn't have said it better. You read it here, um, last: *Rock is back*. **[Jetset, www.jetsetrecords.com]**

—Fred Mills

FUNKI PORCINI
Fast Asleep

Rarely has an album been so aptly named. *Fast Asleep* is the fourth LP from London DJ/producer James Braddell, a crafty breakbeat alchemist who's cloaked his work under the Funki Porcini banner for most of the past decade. True to its title, this album is an audio accompaniment to lost consciousness, quite nearly the sound of time standing still. Braddell's womb-scapes float by almost imperceptibly as if catching a ride on the cosmic breeze, creating enough of a waveform to signify a

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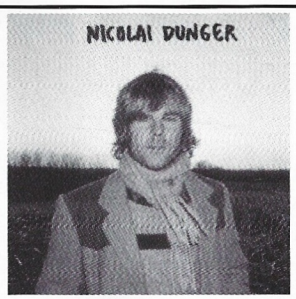

Nicolai Dunger
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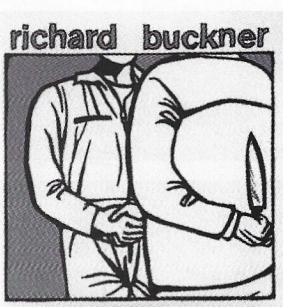

Richard Buckner
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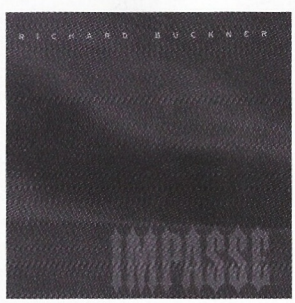

Richard Buckner
Impasse

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cannabis-influenced wry humor but primarily keeping well out of sight, content to register the occasional hint of a heartbeat against a backdrop of suspended animation. *Fast Asleep* is lovely to behold; not really trip hop so much as dream fodder set to a click track, it goes from pristine ("The Big Sea," a keyboards-posing-as-strings slice of heaven interrupted by James Brown's funky drummer) to nearly comic ("We're Out Of Here," an interstellar game-show theme of sorts) and over to slightly groovy ("The Great Drive By") before returning to slumberland once more (the bop-for-the-sedated "Sleep"). Throughout, ear-bending atmospherics and a loopy sense of style inform one of 2002's most twisted spliff odysseys. **[Ninja Tune, www.ninjatune.net]**

—Corey duBrowa

GOLDENBOY
Blue Swan Orchestra

Talk about blown potential. Singer/songwriter Shon Sullivan (a.k.a. Goldenboy), a touring guitarist for Neil Finn, Elliott Smith and Spain, enlisted David McConnell (currently recording Smith's new record) to produce *Blue Swan Orchestra*. All the makings of a pop masterpiece, right? Wrong. Goldenboy's debut, not merely insipid, is downright insufferable. You haven't heard precious until you get a load of Sullivan singing "all the boys go hither, hither" on "Blue Swans Of Winter." Worse than the inane lyric is Sullivan's excruciatingly affected Brit accent. And it doesn't stop there. "Another slice of Christmas pie with some creamy stuff on the side," Sullivan sings on "Babydoll," conjuring visions of him with flowers in his hair, pirouetting around the recording studio with arms aflutter. Meanwhile, the musicianship does little to salvage this torture by twee pop. Recorded in a lo-fi manner, each instrument seems to be engaged in a contest to see which can draw the least attention to itself. That is, except for the keyboards, which keen and whine to annoying effect on the opening "Wild Was The Night." Possibly the only redeeming song is the sparse, acoustic "Summertime," which benefits from Smith's backing falsetto. Overall, however, Goldenboy has the dubious distinction of launching a new genre: mince pop. **[B-Girl, www.b-girlrecords.com]**

—Matt Ryan

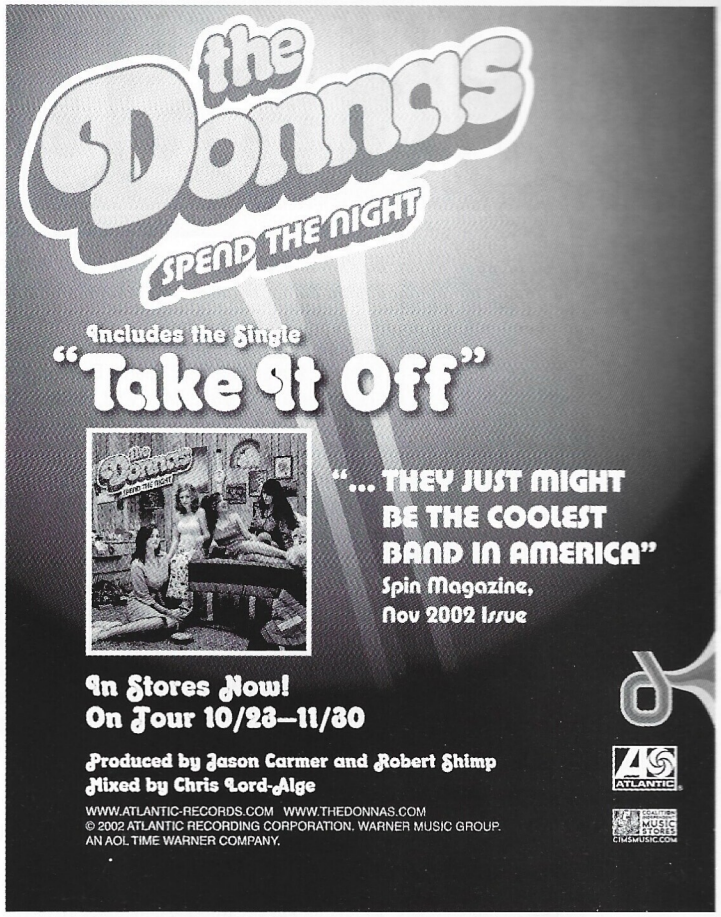
HEROINE SHEIKS
Siamese Pipe

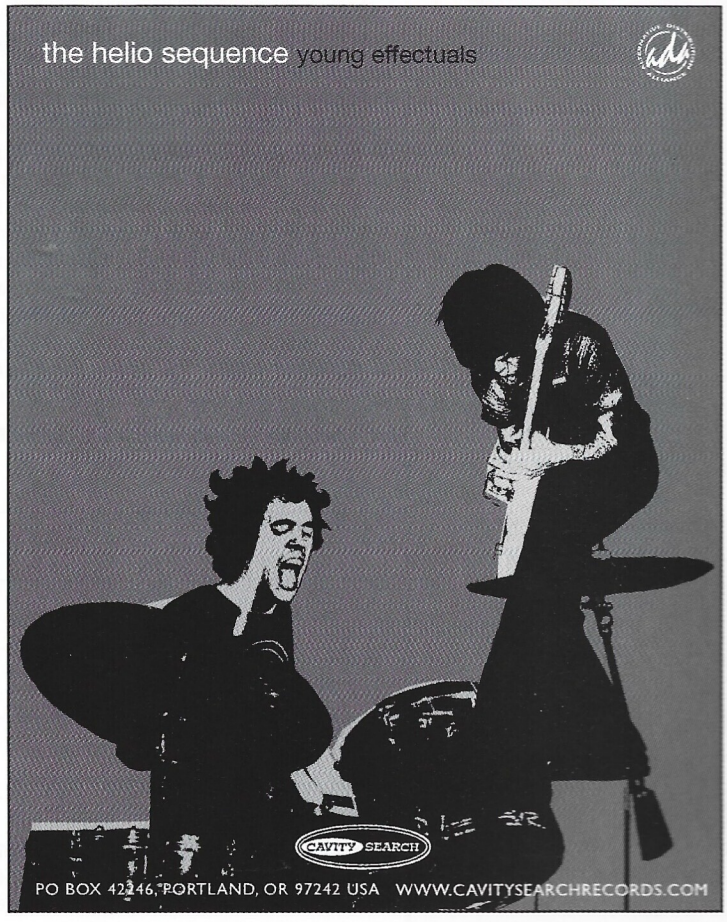
This acid-damaged, noise-punk outfit features ex-Cows singer/bugler Shannon Selberg and former Swans/Foetus guitarist Norman Westberg. With two blatantly important components presented from the outset, it's certain the NYC-bred Heroine Sheiks are more than just a delirious street-punk band of boozing squatters. Their debut album shudders like a rocket launcher in heat, especially on "Army Brat," a full-throttle offensive weapon of annihilating destruction and misdirected humor. A rumbling bass line, Westberg's snarl-and-mangle guitar and Selberg's twisted, immoral sneer grab you by the throat like the Boston Strangler. The weird "3-Banger" is a scarier, lysergic-enhanced noise-rock account of Primus including babbling vocals, funky guitar riffs and experimental electronic effects. The venom-spewing hardcore assault of "My Boss" exudes unadulterated aggression and hatred sorely missing from the retro fashion scene that's now synonymous with punk. The only disappointment is an impractical cover of "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl," a loping, nearly lounge-lizard recreation of a blues standard gone amok between the camps of Ennio Morricone and the Vegas Strip. "Mas Suicide" exits the madness with jagged, surfabilly chords, galloping drums and Selberg's monkey-on-Ritalin vocalizing, which climaxes into a hailstorm of feedback and savagery. These grimy miscreants are exciting, degenerate, literate and funny—and possibly one of the more outrageous and energetic bands to hit the Bowery scene in nearly a decade. **[Rubric, www.rubricrecords.com]**

—Ron Bally

HIS NAME IS ALIVE
Last Night

"I have special powers," sings Lovetta Pippen in perhaps the world's most forlorn admission of supernatural ability. Pippen—the current mouthpiece for this Warn Defever-led, experimental-pop outfit—has the kind of voice that transforms a simple utterance into an emotional kaleidoscope. So it's understandable that splice- and loop-guru Defever, who has been the lone member of Livonia, Mich.'s HNIA since the late 1980s, would completely lose himself in it. (He first worked with Pippen when the gospel choir she belonged to supplied vocals in 1996 for HNIA's *Stars On ESP*.) As on 2001's *Someday My Blues Will Cover The Earth*, Defever's trademark agit-pop takes a back seat to the force of nature that is Pippen. Rather than slice and dice soundscapes or





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imagine sequels to "Good Vibrations," Defever lays down smoothed-out backdrops, blending R&B and patchwork world beat for Pippen to coo above. The feel is markedly similar to the bold departure of *Someday*, as are the results. On originals like the aforementioned "I Have Special Powers" and the deliciously sad "Do You Want To Come To My Party" and covers like "Teardrops" (by Eddy Grant's Equals) and "Maybe" (Ida's "Maybelle"), the Pippen and Defever teaming proves formidable, culminating with the 11-minute, mid-album, free-form jam "Someday My Prince Will Come." Whether you tag this neo-soul for the corduroy set or just straight-up R&B, HNIA's left turn is taking it in a fascinating direction. **[4AD/Beggars Banquet, www.beggars.com]**

—Brian Howard

HOT HOT HEAT
Make Up The Breakdown

Playing dingy basements for the punk elite is a thing of the past for bands like the Faint and Rapture, who can now be heard on heavy rotation at your favorite nightclubs. If an explanation seems in order, the retro revival may be a good place to start. We've seen and heard the return of '60s garage and '70s rock with acts like the Strokes, White Stripes and Hives. Then '80s electro turned cool again with the likes of Peaches, Adult and Miss Kitten. Now disco punk is back, thumping and shaking its heavy bass lines into the forefront. Enter Hot Hot Heat, a quartet from British Columbia that—like the Faint and Rapture—has shed its cocoon and found its wings with a less rock-fixated crowd in tow. Hot Hot Heat's second album owes much of its sound to disco-punk predecessors the Clash and Gang Of Four. Tracks like "Naked In The City Again" and "Talk To Me, Dance With Me" are hot-hot-heavy, gurgling from bass overload and gushing with percussive frenzy. This might be a good time to ask ourselves whether we've really seen the last days of disco. **[Sub Pop, www.subpop.com]**

—Megan Timmerman

MICHAEL HURLEY
Blueberry Wine
Sweetkorn

Michael Hurley is one wayward guy, and this is what keeps the itinerant folk singer interesting. His repertoire veers from folk standards to schmaltzy pop tunes like "Mona Lisa" (from *Sweetkorn*) to his own sometimes mischievous, occasionally melancholy songs. Worlds and eras collide in Hurley's music; the picking sounds as old as the hills, but his eccentric rhythms conceal some pretty sophisticated syncopations. His wobbly voice swoops unpredictably from bluesy storytelling to vertiginous yodeling but always lands in just the right spot. *Blueberry Wine* reissues recordings made in 1964 for the venerable Folkways label using just Hurley's guitar, a friend's violin and the same tape machine that captured Leadbelly's last sessions. Its dozen songs about wine and wandering may sound like typical hobo tales, but Hurley's surreal, deadpan wit is decidedly space-age.

Sweetkorn sounds more fleshed out. It has a chorus of female backup singers whose warbling sounds like a posse of gently mocking ex-girlfriends, and a rhythm section roots several tracks in honky-tonk sawdust. As befits a record by a man in his 60s, *Sweetkorn* has fewer odes to ethanol and is more devoted to living with loss and disappointment, but Hurley's impish humor and unpredictable musical adventurism remain intact. **[Locust, www.locustmusic.com; Trikont, www.trikont.com]**

—Bill Meyer

ILL LIT
WACMusic

That glitchy blip hop and dusty-ass country twang can dovetail so gorgeously is among the more compelling arguments for the existence of a higher power. To listen to "Diner Girls," the first track on Ill Lit's debut, and its claim that "the aliens are coming for us," it's tempting to conclude that power is not of this earth. But there's little else (other than the bizarre cribbing from Twisted Sister, *The Wizard Of Oz* and "New York, New York") that smacks of extra-terrestrial interference on this offering from Brooklynites-turned-Los Angelenos D. Ahearn and M. Moser. *WACMusic* is that rare genre exercise that threatens to hold up under the weight of its own contrivances. Like Beth Orton's *Trailer Park*, *WACMusic* suggests a future world where rednecks and clubfucks can go do some baggy-pantsed line dance in a bar with wack lighting and a spittoon. Of course, what makes the album work isn't its beats (we're not talking 'bout Dre here, folks) but rather the honeyed harmonies and attentive songcraft of its creators. In fact, about halfway through you kind of hope Ahearn and Moser give up the ghost on the electronic stuff. (Then you remember Orton's blasé, mostly de-beated *Central Reservation* and are careful what

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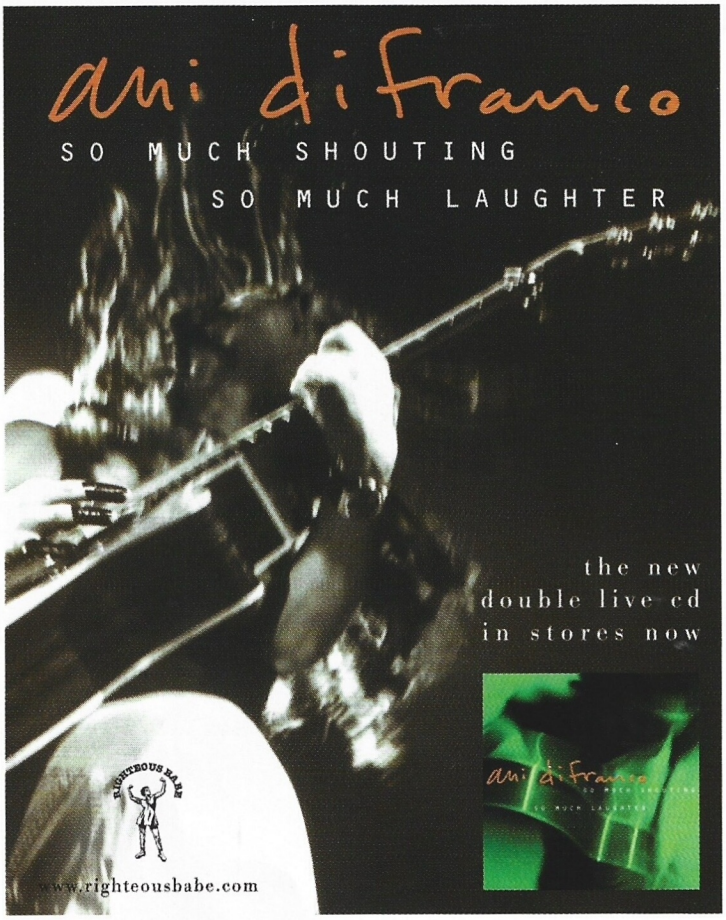


you wish for.) But the truth of the matter is that the beats aren't really necessary on several of the tracks; they sound nice, but you gotta wonder if they're there just for consistency's sake. **[Badman, www.badmanrecordingco.com]**

—Brian Howard

IVY
Guestroom

ELF POWER
Nothing's Going To Happen

There have typically been two kinds of covers albums assembled over the years: 1) the standard-issue multi-artist "tribute" record (including fetes of such acts as the Carpenters by punk bands to Gram Parsons by, erm, country-rock acts); and 2) the basic single-artist "our favorite songs done our way" record (running from the sublime, such as Cat Power's candidly titled *The Covers Record*, to the horrific, like Pat Boone's *In A Metal Mood*). It's into this bipolar context that groups as stylistically disparate as Ivy and Elf Power have opted to put some skin in the game with their latest releases, both of which fall into the latter category of songs the bands know by heart. Each group approaches its task from a separate angle; Elf Power's thin/jagged guitar sound is well-suited to the punked-out material selected for *Nothing's Going To Happen*, while Ivy's surface sheen lends itself natively to the sort of lounge-meets-pure pop material found on *Guestroom*. Ivy's is the more successful of the two, constituting as it does an elegant study of the best of the '80s pop-rock the band has long worshiped. The Go Betweens' "Streets Of Your Town," the Cure's "Let's Go To Bed" and the House Of Love's "I Don't Know Why I Love You" all sound sleek and thematically cohesive when placed side-by-side and treated with Parisian Dominique Durand's breathless, whisper-thin vocal application. When Durand goes on to give props to French homeboy Serge Gainsbourg with a delightfully offhand version of "L'Anamour," the full range of her (and her band's) Ever Changing Moods is there for all to feel.

Elf Power, meanwhile, has made the more interesting record, expanding a 1998 tour-only EP into a full-length containing source material as diffuse as Tall Dwarfs (the title track), Gary Numan's Tubeway Army ("Shadows In Vain"), Frogs (the typically sicko "Weird On The Avenue"), three tracks by Roky Erickson and the Mary Chain's awe-inspiring "Upside Down." It's an overwhelming array of fantastic songs, and while Elf Power doesn't quite nail it every time (their take on T. Rex's "Hot Love" must be a hoot live, but the irony doesn't really work in this context), you've gotta admire the bravado of a band willing to take on both Sonic Youth and the Bad Brains within the span of 16 songs. Ultimately, neither record is essential, but fans will love them both for what they are. **[Minty Fresh, www.mintyfresh.com; Orange Twin, www.orangetwin.com]**

—Corey duBrowa

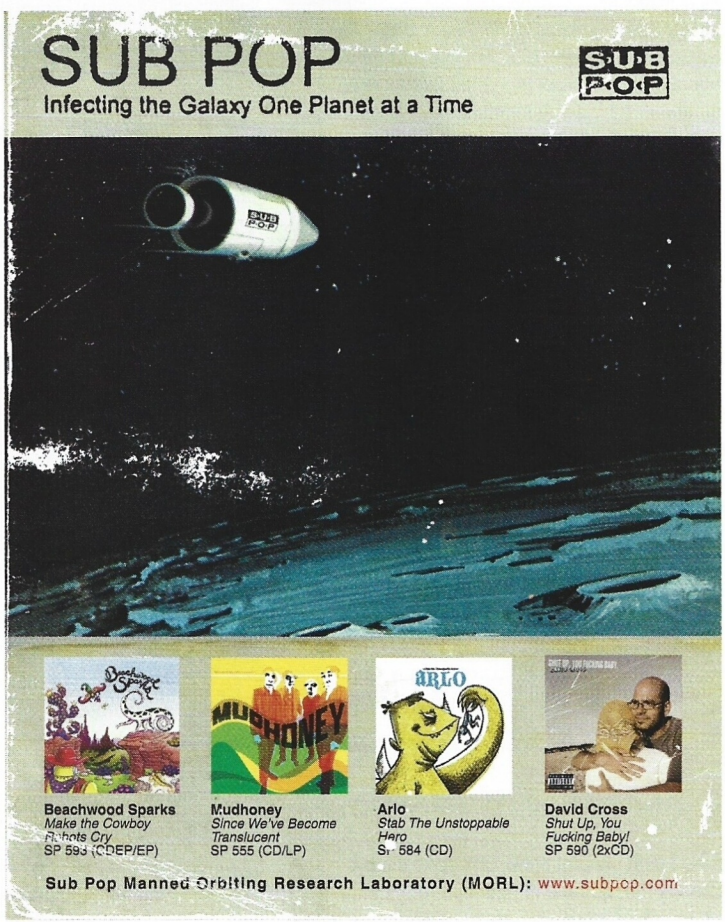
KOUFAX
Social Life

Vagrant Records' Web site posits Koufax as an exponent of "uncool" (giggle quotes courtesy of Vagrant) influences Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson and the Cure. It's typically meaningless promotional babble, especially given that, among those three names, *Social Life* echoes only Jackson. A pop-bent, keyboard-toting band could do worse than get Jackson's *Beat Crazy* stuck in its tape deck, and the last time a group named a truly unforgivable touchstone was Bon Jovi's hilarious mid-'80s genuflection toward Uriah Heep, which is impossible to top. But there's something disingenuous about selling guys hung up on new wave as geeky losers, and that—more than singer/guitarist Robert Suchan's sinus envy and *Social Life*'s heavy-lidded production—is the problem with Koufax. The band mistakes hangdog airs for ironic subtext, something it doesn't need when it poached its sound fair and square. Suchan's enervated, pound-the-Pavement delivery hamstrings co-writer Jared Rosenberg's smart, sugary tunes. The more alert rhythm section sides mainly with Rosenberg's stately piano (which seems, speaking of uncool, greasy with Tony Banks' fingerprints more than Jackson's; check out the kiss-my-Genesis-and-call-me-*Duke* Fender Rhodes on "Bright Side"). Suchan's guitar is actually the more aloof presence, the crinkled nose under Rosenberg's furrowed brow. Though he doesn't dominate *Social Life*'s sound, the album's victories—and there are enough to recommend half of this LP and hope the band sticks around and loosens up—are primarily Rosenberg's. **[Vagrant, www.vagrant.com]**

—Scott Wilson

PETE KREBS & THE GOSSAMER WINGS
I Know It By Heart

One of the standout tracks on *I Know It By Heart* is the bittersweet and wistful



Polyvinyl Fall 2002

October 15:

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"The Nature of Maps" CD (PRC-052)
"...a lushly orchestrated blend of slouchy indie-rock strumming, soaring string arrangements and endearingly off kilter vocals." - CMJ

AM/FM

"The Sky Is The New Ground" CDep (PRC-053)
Four new songs prove why Philadelphia's AM/FM constantly receive reviews like "...AM/FM succeeds by playing Flaming Lips to its own Modest Mouse." - CMJ

Pele

"Enemies" LP/CD (PRC-054)
Fifth album from Milwaukee's Pele. With melodic interplay, charming aggressiveness, and a recently added fourth member doing computer/electronic work, Milwaukee's Pele create a fantastic fifth album.

November 19:

Owen

"No Good For No One Now" CD (PRC-055)
Mike Kinsella (American Football, Cap'n Jazz, Joan of Arc) returns with his second album. "...utterly superb. This is what Coldplay and Travis want to be, but just can't manage. 5/5." - Atomtan.uk

Rainer Maria

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Chitlin' Fooks
Did It Again

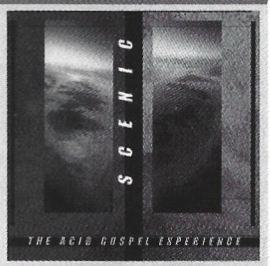
The Chitlin' Fooks' second full-length, *Did It Again*, sounds as if Bettie Serveert's Carol van Dyk, Pascal Deweze and compadres went stomping down the Natchez Trace to get their bootheels all muddy in the murky waters of the Delta.

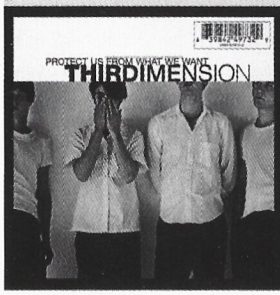
"...the Chitlin' Fooks self-titled debut is the most well crafted album you'll hear this year."-*Oxford American*

"The inspiration of Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris is officially an international phenomenon. How else to explain the surprisingly successful Americana harmonies delivered from Northern Europe via Chitlin' Fooks?"
-*Boston Globe*

Scenic
The Acid Gospel Experience

Desert-soundscape instrumentalists Scenic return with a 73-minute ambient space-rock epic, *The Acid Gospel Experience*. Songs range from the Hawkwind-meets-Stereolab stomp of "Lightspeed", with its sitars and fuzz guitars, to the lush ambience of "Under A Wing," with guest piano by acclaimed ambient elder statesman Harold Budd, and concludes with the 18 1/2 minute dreamscape "A Journey Through The Outer Reaches of Inner Space".



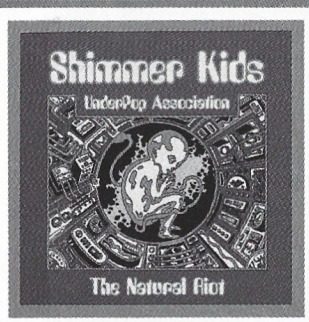


Thirdimension
Protect Us From What We Want

Welcome to the world of Dimensional Hi-Fi: monolithic rock anthems, bigger-than-life ballads, and tweaked guitar-pop epics. The Swedish music press compared them with The Soundtrack of Our Lives, perhaps because the sound of *Protect Us From What We Want* had that same intensity and penchant for roaring sixties psychedelia and elemental prog orchestration as the Soundtrack's debut *Welcome to the Infant Freebase*. Thirdimension are equally adept at moving between different genres within their songs, seamless and satisfying.

Menthol
Danger: Rock Science!

The influence of revered innovators like Gary Numan, Bowie, and classic New Order is dynamically reinvented and updated with Mensa brilliant lyrics and time-warp arrangements retooled for the 21st Century. Retro without a lick of irony and with all the melody that most purveyors of the current Electroklash movement seem to have forgotten once drove their forefathers' genre, Menthol deliver the goods – with panache.

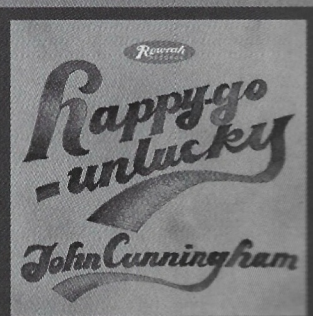


Shimmer Kids UnderPop Asoociation
The Natural Riot

15 songs about soft police, interplanetary paranoia, getaway cars, and cathode ray romances, filtered through guitars, saxes, trumpets, organs, xylophones, theremins, and pianos.

"The Bay Area's premier lo-fi psychedelic band."-*SF Bay Guardian*

"...extraordinarily *Pet Sounds*-ish piece full of sheepish (baa-baa) four-part harmonies sequeing beautifully into a very Olivia-esque instrumental..."-*Ptolemaic Terrascope*



John Cunningham
Happy-Go-Unlucky

Overcast, bittersweet, spectacularly English pastoral pop akin to the esteemed work of artists like Nick Drake and Kevin Ayers.

"..sweetly melancholy collection...pitched somewhere between Robert Wyatt at his most accessibly fragile and The Beatles at their most quietly winsome." -MOJO

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www.retisonic.com

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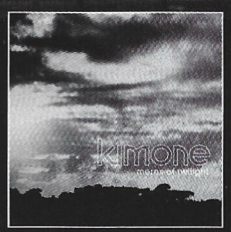

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"Carolina," a beguiling tale of putting an inebriated potential lover to bed despite urges to the contrary. This beautiful bit of angst and longing from Pete Krebs—a purveyor of introspective Americana since quitting explorations of punk/pop and bluegrass in Hazel and Golden Delicious, respectively—treads on ground previously perfected by musician/poets such as ... Morrissey? Well, yes, but before you start wondering what deranged musical experiment Krebs has embarked on this time, rest assured he's still faithful to the intimate honesty last heard on 1999's *Sweet Ona Rose*. Like many of his singer/songwriter contemporaries (Josh Rouse, Chris Mills, Varnaline's Anders Parker), Krebs has broken out of his country container. His sweet, honest love songs, *Pet Sounds*-esque pop and plaintive tales of road-weariness are filtered through a rootsy, Northwestern haze and a poignant, almost English, wit. *I Know It By Heart* is not without its clunkers ("Lonely Street" sounds a little too stylized and unintentionally apes a Strokes vibe), but Krebs can be forgiven for his momentary lapses on an album that, for the most part, shines brilliantly. **[Cavity Search, www.cavitysearchrecords.com]**

—Amy Wan

LANGUIS
Untied

Recently, I saw a picture of a techno DJ who wore goggles. As fashion statement, the lenses were a dud, but they scored points for safety; electronic music has splintered into so many subgenres that unprotected aficionados risk getting one stuck in their eye. From left to right, you've got airbrushed ambient, streamlined techno and glitchy avant-garde. Languis mixes them all together, balancing grit and gloss with accessible-yet-intriguing results. Take "Waterfall," the first tune on the Los Angeles duo's fourth album. It commences with exactly the sort of bubbly, cascading synths you'd expect from the title, but echoing, distorted resonances jut out of the froth like hard black rocks from a whitewater current. The following track, "Touch A Cloud," switches the crystal-bait you'd expect from such an appellation for a percolating groove adorned with guitar leads that bring back fond memories of Colin Newman's early solo records. But while Newman liberally dosed his music with displays of sneering attitude, confrontation isn't on the agenda for these transplanted Argentineans. They prefer to ice their confections with subtly tweaked static and earnestly murmured sentiments. **[Simballrec, www.simballrec.com]**

—Bill Meyer

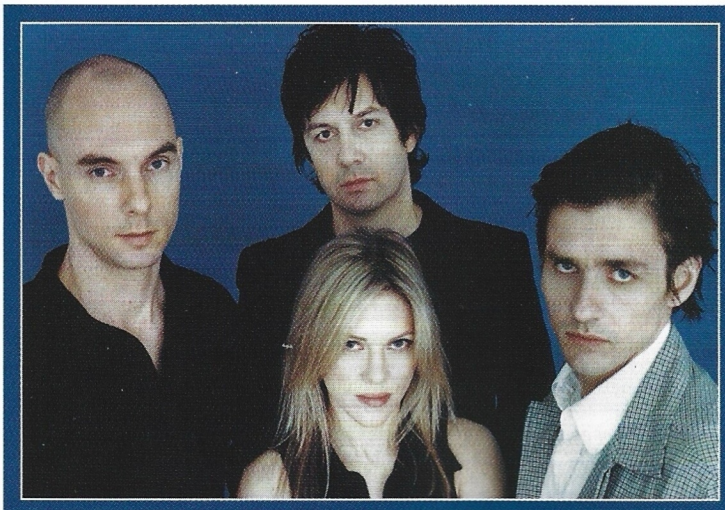
LOOSE FUR
Loose Fur

Lucifer, get it? This puckish triple-tag-team side project—consisting of Wilco's Jeff Tweedy and Glenn Kotche, and Jim O'Rourke's Jim O'Rourke—isn't revelatory, but it isn't a toss-off, either. In fact, the album's six songs (average length: seven minutes) are perfect answers to the superhero-geek's query of what would happen if *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* had sex with *Insignificance* (O'Rourke's 2001 album), right down to the soft-is-the-new-hard, warm-is-the-new-cold production. Lumpy hybridity is the order of the day: The Tweedy/O'Rourke vocal duet "Elegant Transaction" offers some banjo-and-vibraphone jazz, while the instrumental "Carnival Knowledge" beckons the dawn of post-bluegrass before it hurtles into a Sonic-Youthful seizure. "So Long" is ugly for a spell before it's beautiful, and its pure-pop moments get slopped out by some mangly electric pluckwork that I'd accuse of Gastr-Del-Solipsism if Tweedy weren't the one committing it. Maybe he's breaking out of the straitjacket of Wilco expectations, but his arms seem to have atrophied. He's still the man who loves you, though. See the rodeo-riffing drive of "Laminated Cat," the broken soul of "You Were Wrong" and the avant-Americana of "Chinese Apple." Hang on to your egometer for arch lyrical reminders that self-effacement is still self-interest: Tweedy sings, "You were wrong/To believe in me," and O'Rourke admits, "If I said I love you/I was talking to myself." Lazily brilliant, Loose Fur should silence anyone who still views Wilco's arty chops as dilettante-ish. **[Drag City, www.dragcity.com]**

—William Bowers

LOWERY 66
Holiday With Genie

This is what happens when six really smart (two history professors and a neurobiologist among them), precocious twentysomethings with a bunch of instruments and a Yo La Tengo fetish listen to too much Gram Parsons and Glen Campbell. Guitarist/songwriter John Troutman (who also plays in Brooklyn's Mendoza Line and Austin's Western Keys) is perpetually searching for that place where Neil Young and Lou Barlow get it on. His sometimes fiery, sometimes tenuous vocals hang and bob above the mic,



LUNA
CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

After the Luna-by-numbers of its last full-length, *Romantica*, New York's finest Velvet Underground torch-bearer lights a brighter fire with the seven-song *Close Cover Before Striking*. Though the term "mini-album" is too often synonymous with "collection of b-sides and toss-offs," this one stands up to any of Luna's LPs (and especially its last two). Maybe condensing things helped Dean Wareham focus: *Close Cover* offers little bits of everything Luna does well, with two uppers, two downers, two covers and a fine instrumental. "Astronaut" chugs along with about as much energy as the band ever musters, buoyed as always by Wareham's clever and cheeky lyrics—he rhymes "pentagram" and "Diazepam," as well as "pope" and "scope." "Teenage Lightning" and "New Haven Comet" slide slowly and sweetly along Britta Phillips' bass lines. And Luna has always done justice to other people's songs; the Rolling Stones' "Waiting On A Friend" and Kraftwerk's "Neon Lights" are played not for laughs but with reverence. It's the perfect balance for a band that's always been capable of terrific records.

MAGNET found Wareham at everybody's second home, the Internet.

I saw author Chuck Palahniuk speak recently, and he talked about not being able to shake the tag of "the *Fight Club* guy." Do you have any problem being "the Galaxie 500 guy" at this point?

That's funny. I just saw a poster on Houston Street for Chuck Palahniuk, and it says "Author Of *Fight Club*" in big letters, so he must not mind too much. I don't really feel like "the Galaxie 500 guy," certainly not in America, and it wouldn't upset me anyway—it's not like Brad Pitt was involved with the project.

Can you think of Luna-worthy rhymes for Ritalin, conjugal and Wareham?

In a Ritalin snitalin, Wareham and dare 'em, conjugal fish.

Are the songs on *Close Cover* outtakes, or was this a new batch of recordings?

"Astronaut" and "Teenage Lightning"—my favorites on this mini-LP—are brand-new songs done just for this record, but the rest of them are outtakes from the *Romantica* sessions, except for "Neon Lights," which dates from 1999. "Waiting On A Friend" came out really well, too ... The original Stones song, though on *Tattoo You*, is actually an outtake from *Goat's Head Soup* and features the playing of Mick Taylor. I have Taylor's instructional guitar video, which is quite amusing.

Have you ever tried any covers that just didn't work for Luna?

We recently did "Dancing Days" by Led Zeppelin, but we failed to make it interesting. We also did "Only Women Bleed" by Alice Cooper, but were unable to remove all the cheese from that song; it's available on a U.K. promo single. We recorded Paula Abdul's "Straight Up" for a record called *Good Vs. Evil*, a record that may never be released.

I heard you're an avid eBayer; are you a junk collector or a budding salesman?

eBay is a good way to find an obscure musical instrument or maybe a Lee Hazlewood record. Or sell something I'm not using anymore or just waste time. Recently, I bought a little Chitty Chitty Bang Bang car. My most successful sale was of three Led Zeppelin CD singles that I got for free from our record company in Japan. I sold them for $600 to a banker in midtown. **[Jetset, www.jetsetrecords.com]**

—*Josh Modell*

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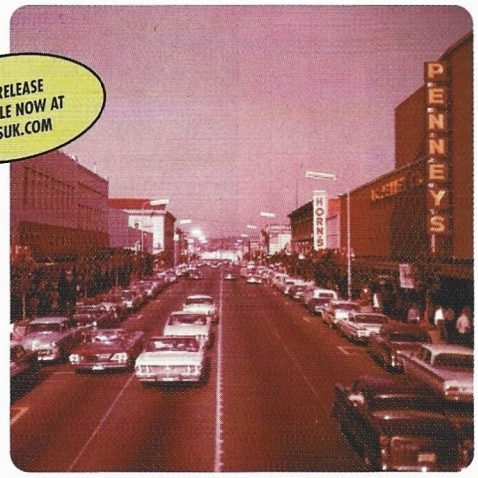

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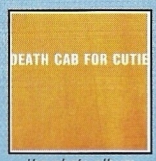

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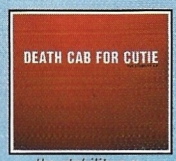

the stability e.p.

something about airplanes

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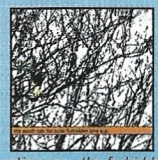
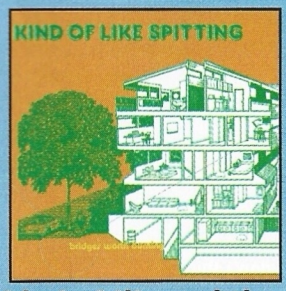


the forbidden love e.p.

death cab for cutie

storytelling far above the occasionally fetching but frequently fleeting indie-pop cumulus. **- The Los Angeles Times**



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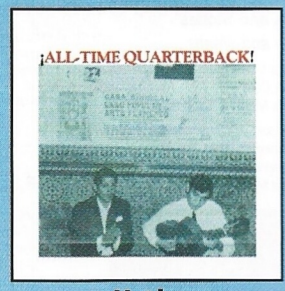

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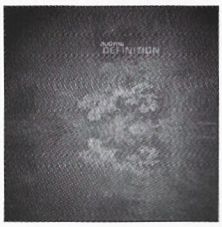

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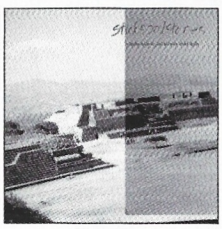

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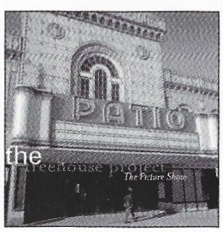

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»PREVIEW JOHNNY MARR & THE HEALERS

BOOMSLANG (IMUSIC), OUT FEBRUARY 4

The Smiths couldn't have been less like the Stones in most ways—sound and attitude, for starters—but don't fool yourself about the parallels between guitarists Johnny Marr and Keith Richards. Both are impossibly skinny men of few words (Mick or Morrissey never stopped yammering anyway) but verbose, rhythmically intense guitar playing. Vilified by the press when he abruptly ended the Smiths in 1987, Marr—whom many predicted would flourish while Morrissey faded into obscurity—kept a low profile for the next 15 years and became the ultimate six-string sidekick, playing with the Pretenders, The The, Billy Bragg, Neil Finn and Beck. He also put out three albums as Electronic, a dancey superduo with New Order's Bernard Sumner that never quite equaled the sum of its parts. With the Healers—drummer Zak Starkey (Ringo's son) and bassist Alonza Bevan (Kula Shaker)—the prodigal Mancunian returns to rock 'n' roll. Yes, he

sings, with a voice that's part Sumner and part Liam Gallagher, and *Boomslang* feels like past and future Marr. His trademark 12-string jangle peacefully coexists with backward-guitar leads and groovy percussion in psych-friendly, four-to-seven-minute tracks. While *Boomslang* may not be privy to the hyperliterate lyricism of Marr's past vocal collaborators, it's got a kind of (Northern) soul that words can't manufacture.

MAGNET sent its Smiths superfan to meet Marr at a New York hotel. Upon spotting Marr in the lobby, superfan admits to hiding behind a potted plant for a moment to collect whatever cool he could muster.

I don't think many people realized you could sing. Were you self-conscious about it?

Not once I started to get my sound together. I didn't want to hold anything up by going on this interminable search around the world for mister frontman. The band convinced me that what I was doing was not just strong but fairly ... odd. If they'd said "soulful," "beautiful" and all that ...

"Johnny, we like your vocal stylings."

[*Laughs*] Exactly, exactly. They used words like "ill" and "weird" and "odd" and "white," and I was kind of like, "OK, I can do that." Because I trust them. And I know their only agenda being in a band with me is because they believe we can do something to turn them on. They don't need to be in a band with Johnny Marr for their lives to be complete.

Why do a solo album now? Was it about the songs you had, or were you not ready for something like this before?

Two years before I met Zak, I was subconsciously looking for a band and a sound that never came. And was never gonna come unless I did it myself, which was like a wide-awake rock but without an agenda to be incredibly modern. Not to say I wanted to be traditional or bring back any cause for real rock, but just melodic rock 'n' roll, really, with a bit of an esoteric, druggy spin on it.

There is a slightly psychedelic, layered texture to the album.

Layering guitars might not be *de rigueur*, but it's what I do. It's what gives me a buzz, and therefore, it's genuine. I had to tell myself, "C'mon, Johnny, make the assumption that your audience wants you to sound like you. It's been quite a long time." And I started to listen to people like Bernard Sumner, who said, "What the fuck is wrong with sounding like you?" I felt like I was being boxed or pegged, because I did a lot when I was very young. Bernard would say, "Aw, Electronic's records, they don't have enough guitar on them, and everyone's going to think it's my fault."

Some were probably expecting *Boomslang* to be an army of 12-string Rickenbackers jangling away.

Funnily enough, I've started playing the 12-string Rickenbacker again. Someone passed me one in a shop, and it just sounded like me. I went, "OK. Guilty."

In the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll equation, rock 'n' roll has always eclipsed the other two for you. And that applies to Morrissey as well.

The thing that brought us really close together is the essence of why he lives his life and why I live my life. And that is that without what we consider to be the art of pop music and pop culture, life doesn't make any sense. He needed it like I needed it. It wasn't just the need to escape our social situation, because underneath it all, one of the things that makes us the same is that we're both incredibly sensitive. There were serious mental problems that were taken care of by records ... I guess I'm being flowery about it, but as kids, we both felt absolutely crazy until we discovered pop music, and we're not alone in it. And I guess that's why people can relate to us. People think that I'm the antithesis of Morrissey. If that's the thing they relate to me for, well, they're wrong. Maybe it's just my aesthetic that they don't truck with; and I'm cool with that, 'cause I don't truck with theirs, either. The thing that they get from him, he got from me as well—and I got from him. We heard and saw things in records that weren't even there.

If you don't mind a bit of flattery, I think the way you played guitar two decades ago helped change what people thought good guitar playing was. At the time, it was mostly about Eddie Van Halen, big solos. You brought it back to a level of ...

Melody, rhythm and getting to the point. Emotive. There's no musicality in technique for technique's sake, as we all know. I didn't so much listen to records as study them. When I was learning to play, I wouldn't listen to the guitar player and then try to play the guitar part—I'd try to play the whole record. That was the thing that set me on fire. I purposely bought a Rickenbacker so I wouldn't play like a blues player. Obviously I appreciate Jimmy Page, but that wasn't what it was about. I wanted to hear a whole Phil Spector record when I played the guitar. **[www.imusic.com]**

—Matthew Fritch

[More of Marr on the Healers, Smiths and Manchester at www.magnetmagazine.com]

remembering drunk bike rides and picket fences while snuggling up close to generous sheets of feedback, organ, pedal steel and accordion. There's really a lot going on here. Lowery 66 is full of sweet, tuneful cacophony ("It's Alright"), bittersweet violin-driven rock 'n' roll ("Hello"), waltz-like foot-tappers ("Artifacted") and what the Go-Betweens might sound like if they were from Austin instead of Australia. Sometimes it's confusing, sometimes it's weird and sometimes you think the band might crumble under the weight of its own idols. But it never, ever gets the best of 'em. **[India, www.indiarecords.com]**

—Beth Wawerna

MAGIC DIRT
What Are Rock Stars Doing Today

I don't know about rock stars, but I can tell you what Magic Dirt vocalist Adalita Srsen isn't doing today, for openers. She's ditched the abrasive *Pretty On The Inside*-era Courtney Love screech from Magic Dirt's 1996 opus *Friends In Danger* for a spunky, new-wave blend of fellow Australian Christina Amphlett (Divinyls) and Chrissie Hynde. *Rock Stars*—out Down Under since 2000—is just as radical a break from past performance as Hole's *Live Through This* was from all that came before. Sometimes it works for Magic Dirt, sometimes it doesn't. Producer Phil Vinall (Elastica, Auteurs) wisely emphasizes the twin facets of the Pretenders vibe, both brash ("City Trash") and vulnerable ("Nightingale"). But Srsen repeating the lyrics to "Dirty Jeans" like an over-caffeinated squirrel on a wheel ("On a train in the corner with a mind-numbing headache ... I haven't washed my jeans in three months or more") five times straight without a break in a three-minute song is enough to give the listener, as well as the singer, a migraine. Fortunately, there's enough hot stuff—"Pace It" seethes like a roiling cauldron of Patti Smith's sweaty undies and Johnny Ramone's jockstraps—on this two-disc set to make up for the occasional pratfall. **[Sweet Nothing, www.sweetnothingrecords.co.uk]**

—Jud Cost

MANITOBA
Start Breaking My Heart

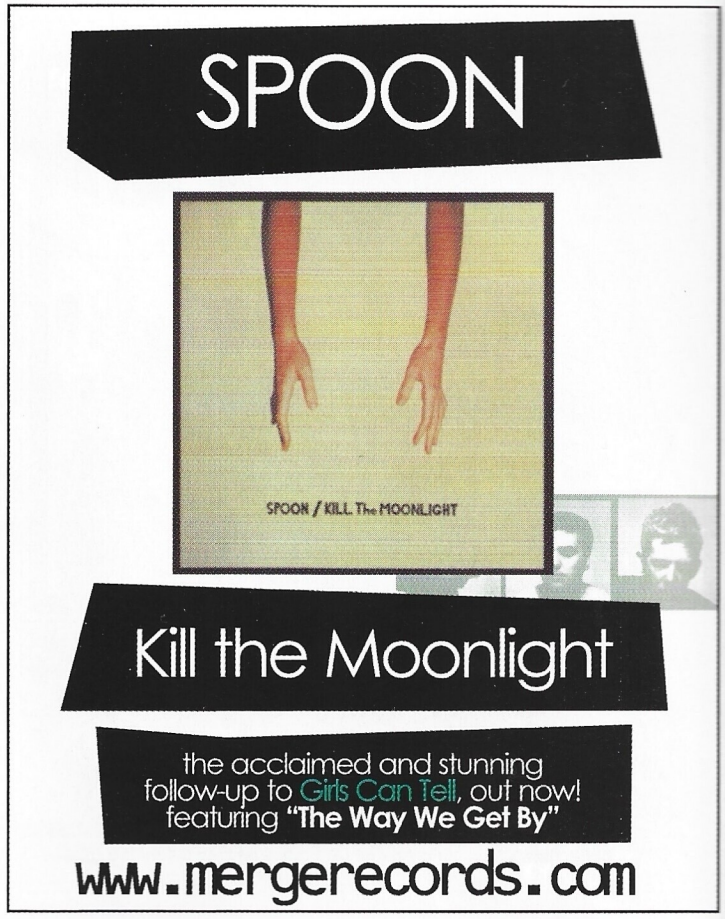
It's guys like Dan Snaith who devalue life's accomplishments to being on par with completing a daily word jumble or squeezing a ball in your right hand. When the 22-year-old classically trained pianist isn't pursuing a master's degree in mathematics, he's moonlighting as Manitoba, which records elevating magic like *Start Breaking My Heart*, an electronic album that should put both Aphex Twin and Boards of Canada on suicide watch. Most assuredly as goofy as the former but not as dark as the latter, *Start Breaking My Heart* may be the most emotionally evocative statement of its type (electronica, glitchtronica) since Christian Fennesz's giddy *Endless Summer* in 2001. Take all of those obligatory comparisons and add mounds of sampled percussion, but before you go running to the hills, this is far removed from a misguided exercise in fake worldtronica (note: not a real word). Should I mention the sense of humor? Always! And it's a sense of humor disparate from the narcissistic snickering favored by Aphex Twin, which would never title a song "Tits And Ass: The Great Canadian Weekend." Whatever your personal mood, it will be greatly enhanced in one direction or another by this album; let's just hope you're not lamenting over a long-distance relationship or your grocery-sacking aunt. Suicide watch, indeed. **[Domino, www.dominorecordco.com]**

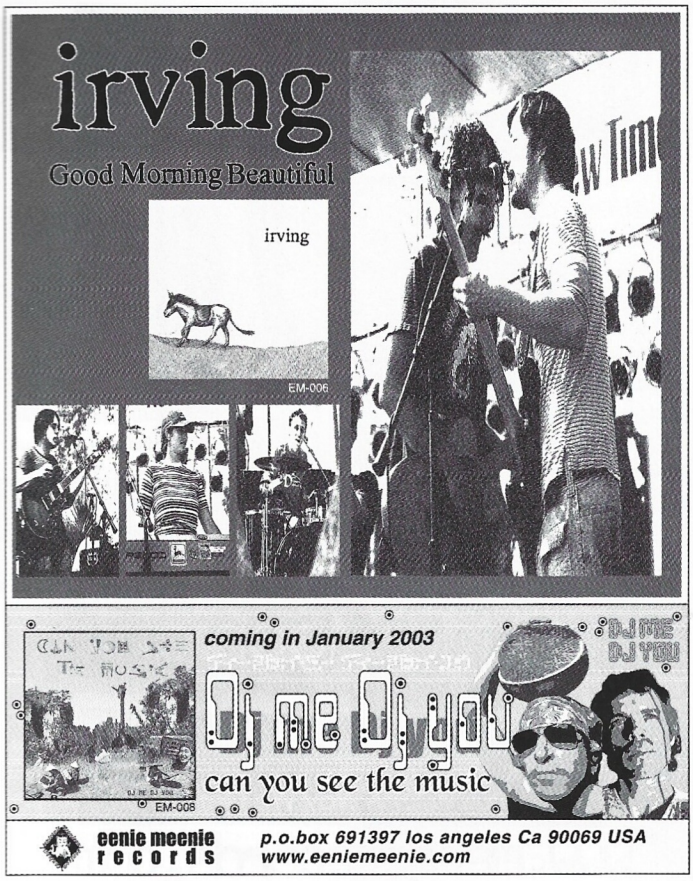
—Andrew Earles

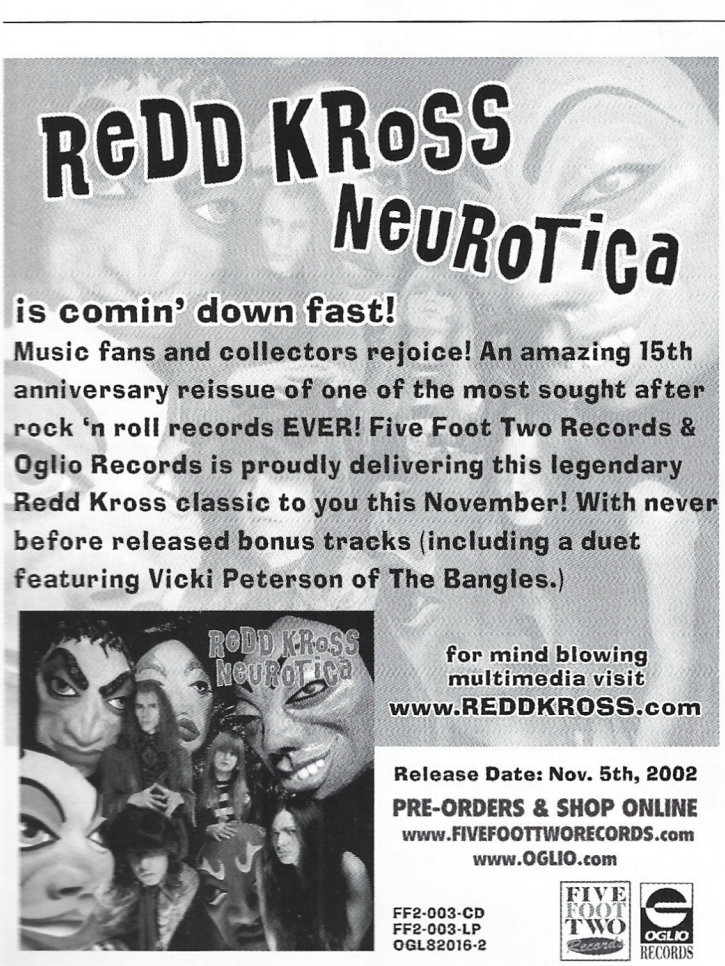
GRAIG MARKEL
The Gospel Project

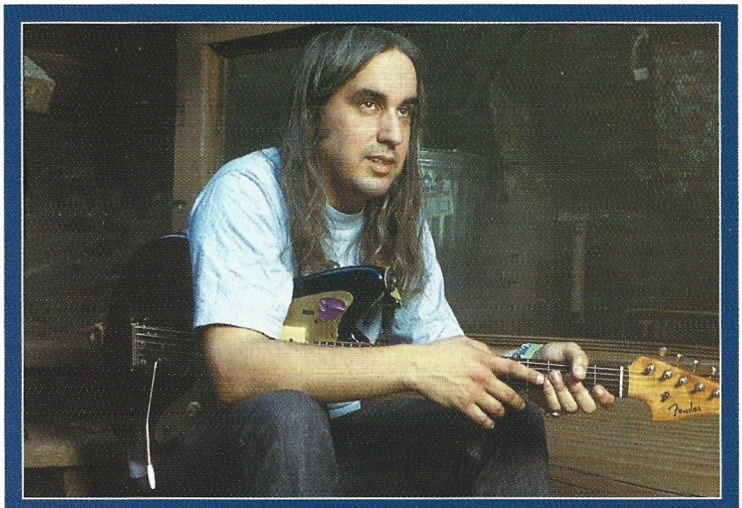
Approach Graig Markel's second solo release with some skepticism. Markel, former frontman for Seattle groups Tagging Satellites and New Sweet Breath, is, after all, your average white boy with a guitar. He's tackling difficult territory here, moving into a genre that's notoriously unforgiving for weak songwriters or impotent vocalists. Unfortunately, *The Gospel Project* proves that mediocre soul albums are some of the world's least filling musical offerings. In all fairness, the record does have its inspired moments—"Finer Side" blends Quiet Storm guitar solos, helium-soaked backing vocals and grungy chord progressions into a sultry, hip-grinding ballad—but for the most part, Markel is unable to fill out Barry White's velvet jacket. "Salvation Comes To Me" and "The Last Monarch" trip over themselves attempting to sound silky-smooth, instead seeming like a contrived attempt to get hipsters into bed. Unlike Beck or the Gossip, Markel doesn't have an ear for combining elements of black soul and singer/songwriter indie rock. Instead, he slaps the two on a plate, throws on an orchestral flourish as garnish and calls the whole thing a gourmet meal. **[Recovery/Pattern 25, www.pattern25.com]**

—Tizzy Asher









J MASCIS + THE FOG
FREE SO FREE

In 1987, when J Mascis was 21 years old, he used a little something called *You're Living All Over Me* to unwittingly write the next decade of indie rock and make some musicians other than himself very famous. He sees what most don't, or what others consider nothing, and with the vehicle of rock, he can pump up this mediocrity and everyday riff raff into very human elements. Dinosaur Jr was, by most accounts, phoning it in during the '93-'97 home stretch before ending with *Hand It Over*, a relatively strong divorce. The next three years of deafening silence gave way in 2000 to J Mascis + The Fog's *More Light*; its follow-up is an electric metal/folk storm that might raise questions about the validity of Queens Of The Stone Age. Conspicuously absent of *More Light* guests like Kevin Shields and Robert Pollard, *Free So Free* is nonetheless a continuum of J Mascis Mach II—a show of artistic rejuvenation after weathering that asshole of alterna-apathy that we remember as the '90s.

To confuse matters more, MAGNET's conversation with Mascis veered away from the new album and into past waters and current misrepresentations.

If your press bio is to be believed, you're now into skydiving. Is it to be believed?
No, it's all lies. I've never been skydiving. (Journalist) Byron Coley wrote that to entertain himself.

Did you play everything on *Free So Free*?
Yeah, pretty much, except for some slide guitar. [For live shows], it's me solo acoustic, then the guys from Cobra Verde will be backing me.

What's the status of the Stooges tribute band with you, Mike Watt and the Asheton brothers? What's the name of the band?
We are going to get back together and do another handful of gigs. The name started as Asheton Watt And Mascis, around the time we were invited by Sonic Youth to do All Tomorrow's Parties. Then Ron (Asheton) had a T-shirt made that says Asheton Asheton Watt And Mascis, which I think is a kind of a mouthful.

What's your worst tour experience?
Easily Lollapalooza '93. That was the last straw for (Dinosaur Jr drummer) Murph; he was done after that one. It was like waking up every day in a summer camp that you really didn't want to be a part of, and we were treated like kids in that it felt as though we were punished when we weren't "good." And we weren't good at all—we played terrible because we were so miserable. On top of all this, it was like the hottest day of the year in every single city that the festival played. The label thought that doing Lollapalooza would make the album go gold, but I'll bet that playing to a million people sold something like 50 albums.

Were you happy with how Dinosaur was portrayed in Michael Azerrad's book *Our Band Could Be Your Life*?
No, not really. He seemed really interested in Lou (Barlow)'s saga and not at all interested in interviewing Murph. He finally interviewed Murph at the very end of the Dinosaur chapter, but that was after everyone pestered him about it. **[Ultimatum, www.ultimatummusic.com]**

—Andrew Earles

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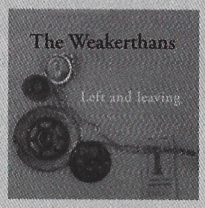

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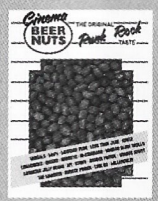

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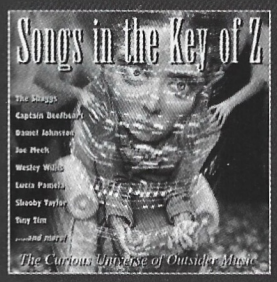

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MELIGROVE BAND
Let It Grow

Yes, it needs to grow. I've heard this record too many times. Not this one, per se, but the example that *Let It Grow* makes. It's a typical first album. In fact, even more so given that it's a pop album. The formula is here, the producer is here (Stephen Pitkin of the Flashing Lights), the locale is here (the very pop-friendly Vancouver), and it's all worn proudly on the sleeve of a band that needs to understand the unattractiveness of forced art. And while we're on a mission here, the lack of songs is another troubling area. Prominently displayed on *Let It Grow*'s artwork are the band members' hyper-cherubic good looks, so much so that it could be a NAMBLA brochure. I'm the last guy on Earth to denounce sappy pop music, but the Meligrove Band's lyrics are a wee trite for my comfort level. I understand the nod embedded in the fake *Batman* theme that starts the record, but doesn't everyone know that Keith Moon's forays into silliness were the worst thing about early Who? This misdirection is indicative of *Let It Grow* as a whole, perhaps an album destined for future condemnation from a band that will mature into something great. Remember, one man's hook could be no great shakes to another. It's relative. Maybe. **[Endearing/Ductape, www.endearing.com]**

—Andrew Earles

MICROPHONES
Mount Eerie

2001's *The Glow, Pt. 2*—despite its virtues as a canny bit of homespun tape manipulation and its occasionally fluid melodies—is, in retrospect, a loud (and vastly overrated) warning that Phil Elvrum's lone-gun act no longer had the safety on. The unintentionally hilarious *Mount Eerie* misfires so dramatically, it makes you want to reconsider not the Second Amendment but the First. *Eerie* is a concept album during which the narrator meets a rude end hiking up a mountain. Opener "The Sun" organizes its first three minutes around what sounds like a faint heartbeat and a distant foghorn, then unleashes jittery Brazilian percussion that weaves in and out of the mix like a footchase through the streets of Rio de Janeiro during Carnival. That's as good as *Mount Eerie* gets. Eleven minutes in, Elvrum, coming across like David Byrne after a severe head injury, triumphs over the drumline with his rueful voice and a few chagrined guitar chords. The remainder of the album attaches Elvrum's slurred voice to looped choral backdrops and detuned toms; unfortunately, such tired avant-garde staples as radio static, cheapo distortion and chanting are also part of the sonic wallpaper. The climactic murder scene plays in choppy bursts of heavy breathing and multi-tracked moaning like *Julius Caesar* performed by the theater troupe from *Waiting For Guffman*. Limited-edition a cappella and rhythm-track-only versions—seriously—are also available. For suckers. **[K, www.krecs.com]**

—Scott Wilson

CHRIS MILLS
The Silver Line

The older I get, the more predictable my behavior becomes. It's pathetic. I inevitably pull out the same clunky black shoes to go with the same ratty pair of jeans, order the same food from the same places and do the same stupid shit to the people I love, then hustle up an apology just in the nick of time to save my sorry ass. Chicagoan Chris Mills can relate to sad sacks like me. Or, more appropriately, I can relate to *him* and take solace in his unhappily drawn tales of the flawed, the fucked-up and the falling down. On his self-released third album, Mills conjures the occasional spirits of the giants who've inspired his work (Dylan, Springsteen, Van Morrison, Elton John) but mostly puts his imprint squarely on the barrelhead of a batch of flat-out fantastic songs. Veering between bloody heartbreak and self-recriminating anger, Mills pours out his soul on tracks such as "Suicide Note" (a Memphis-meets-Morrison duet with Kelly Hogan), the twilight stunner "I Could Not Stand To See You" and "Diamond," a drinking song Paul Westerberg might appreciate that starts bluntly ("I heard you're a drunk, and you never shut up") but ends on just the right note of bitter hope ("I'm sweeping the ashes from your burned-out eyes ... I just want to see them shine"). Throughout, Mills decorates his straightforward melodies with horns, strings and keys that twinkle like stars through the midnight-blue canvas of doubt and despair that Mills seems more fixated upon with each passing release. Which suits boring old codgers like me just fine. **[Powerless Pop, www.powerlesspop.com]**

—Corey duBrowa

MINUS THE BEAR
Highly Refined Pirates

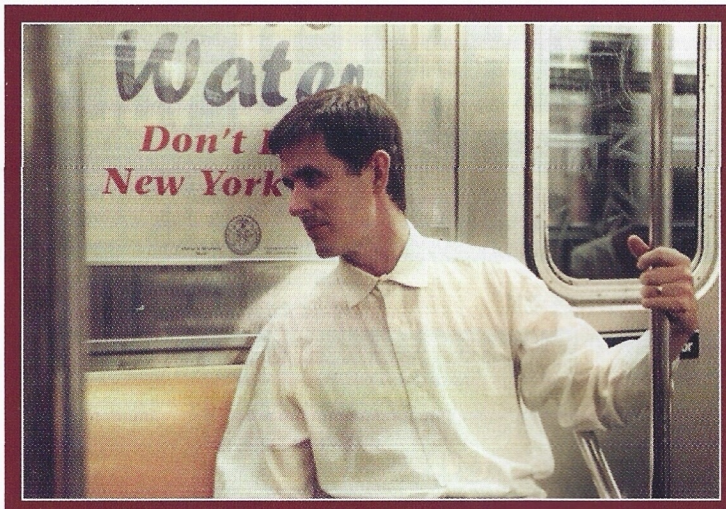
Well, I guess this is growing up—or growing old. Two years and counting into the 21st century, and much of Geek America still wants to rock out emo style, as if all those sweat-soaked hoodies and all-ages shows would stop us from waking up as aching adults working crappy temp jobs. Minus The Bear is a rock band from Seattle with members also serving time as DIY lifers in Botch and Sharks Keep Moving. Surely, this is exciting enough news for someone to fire up the button maker, but before you do so, please step back, look around and come to terms with just how tired this shit is getting. The band's second album is a post-Fireside Bowl bore, stalling at 1994 in a time machine where Jawbox's post-punk bounce and Cap'n Jazz's, ugh, "jazz" is in constant rotation. There are hooks aplenty if that's your bag, and if you were able to sit through the last Hey Mercedes record, surely this isn't the worst thing you'll hear all year. But this Bear has clearly been hibernating for a few years too many—and if the band insists on living like it was yesterday, the least it could do is make it sound like today. Call it *Highly Devolved*. **[Suicide Squeeze, www.suicidesqueeze.net]**

—Trevor Kelley

MR. AIRPLANE MAN
Moanin'

Precariously perched in the same musical tree that cradles the Gun Club's *The Fire Of Love*, the Bassholes' *Long Way Blues*, the White Stripes' *De Stijl* and any number of Fat Possum Records sides from the late Junior Kimbrough is the third album from Mr. Airplane Man. The two-gal Boston duo has "refined its sound" (phrase used relatively) since forming five years ago, perfecting its garage-blues stomp and jettisoning—on record, at least, possibly due to producer Jim Diamond's hand—a lot of the sonic rawness that tended to overshadow a deep, soulful streak. The set list features several superb covers, including two penned by Howlin' Wolf and traditional number "Jesus On The Mainline." On its originals, however, MAM really cuts loose, suggesting that reverence isn't key. On the ferocious boogie "Uptight," Margaret Garrett's guitar chords turn filthier by the second as Tara McManus' drum-kit abuse eggs her on. When Garrett abruptly experiences a PJ Harvey moment at the mic, emitting a sustained, yowlping paroxysm of dread, lust and revenge, you readily imagine that if this chick ever got within lemon-squeezing distance of her former lover, it'd be more than just juice running down the poor sap's legs. This, of course, is the essence of the blues: pleasure and pain mingling in a terminal death's-door dance. **[Sympathy For The Record Industry, www.sympathyrecords.com]**

—Fred Mills



MOUNTAIN GOATS
TALLAHASSEE

Tom Waits' wife once said her husband's entire oeuvre could be divided into two categories: Grim Reapers and Big Weepers. I'm not John Darnielle's wife, but I'd like to propose a similar categorization system for Mountain Goats songs: They're either Heartbreaking Twerps or Swaggering Geniuses. Or both, as they are on *Tallahassee*, an astonishing, merciless chronicle of a marriage gone rancid with resentment. Swinging from raw vulnerability to big, blustery bravado, Darnielle spits life into two frighteningly authentic characters and forces us to watch as they cruelly devour each other. It's a tour de force for a songwriter whose penchant for witty lyrics has caused some to dismiss him as novelty. There's nothing funny about *Tallahassee*. Employing little instrumentation beyond his voice and guitar, Darnielle invests each line with devastating gravity. It's horrible to hear the husband holler "I hope you die/I hope we both die" on "No Children," because just four songs earlier, he was singing "I am not gonna lose you/We are gonna stay married." The swift contradiction is one of the many things that makes *Tallahassee* so gripping—and so incredibly real.

Darnielle, on tour in Ireland, spared a few moments to discuss the record's origins.

***Tallahassee* is the final episode in the lives of a couple you've been writing songs about for years. Why did you choose to revive them?**

I wanted to see what would happen if I brought back these people who I'd stopped writing about because I couldn't stand to see them hurt each other anymore. I wanted to look into the more human, less cartoonishly angry parts of them and see if I could kind of treat them decently. Give them real hearts.

One of the things that is most amazing to me about this record is the balance between vitriol and tenderness.

That was hard, because vitriol is kind of addictive once you get going. I just kept thinking about this period in the couple's distant past during which they really were hopelessly in love and full of that great, innocent sense of promise. I thought a lot about how much I love my wife and how much I treasure being married. I'd try to imagine what our fights might sound like if the neat thing we've got started to go to hell. I'd imagine her voice in real dismissive anger, you know, and think up hateful things to say in reply. It was awful dark, actively encouraging thoughts like that.

When I heard this album was recorded at (Dave Fridmann's) Tarbox Road Studios, I expected it to be pretty lush.

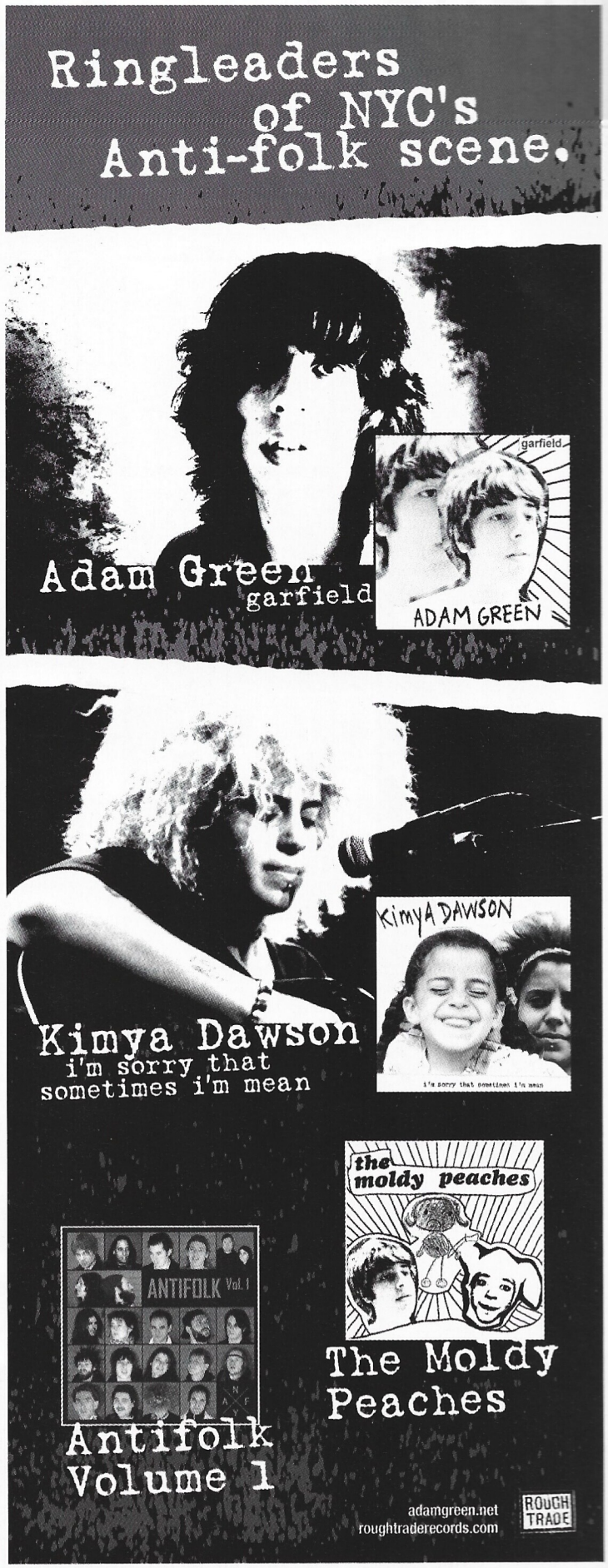
I'm leery of overdoing things. Considering that most of my songs are about human relationships under unsustainable pressure, overburdening them with bells and whistles might take the focus off of the characters and their horrible little problems.

Do you have to battle many misconceptions about your writing?

Some critics seem to think that because I work a lot, I must not be working very hard. That's nonsense. Also, there's one guy who thinks that all my songs are veiled tributes to William Friedkin. That guy drives me crazy. **[4AD/Beggars Banquet, www.beggars.com]**

[Ed. note: Darnielle contributes to MAGNET.]

—J. Edward Keyes



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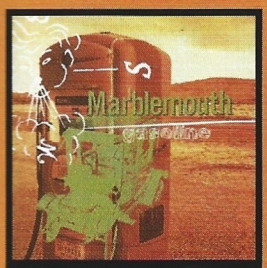

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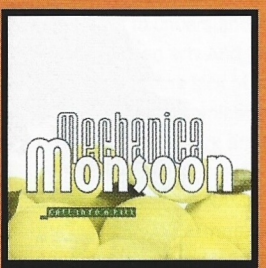

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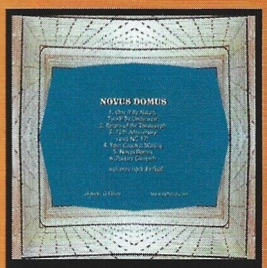

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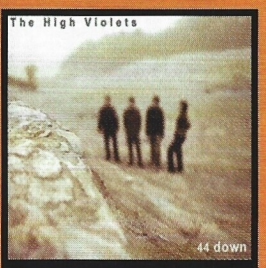

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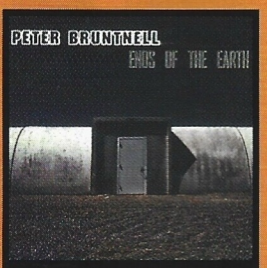

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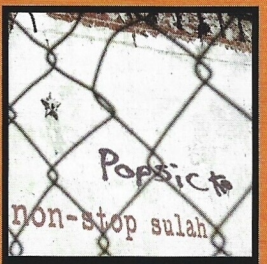

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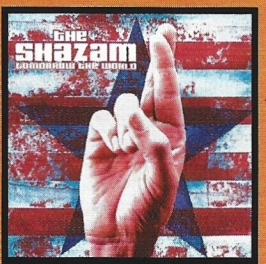

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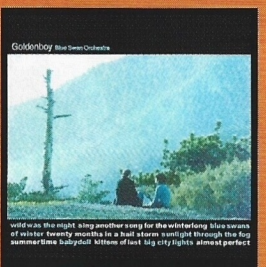

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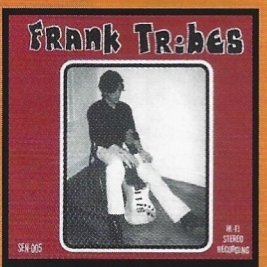

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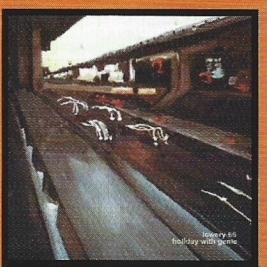

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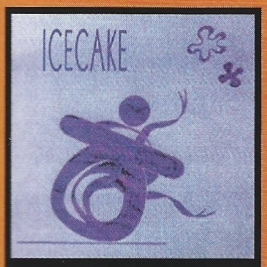

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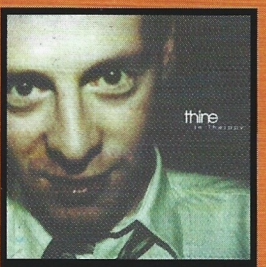

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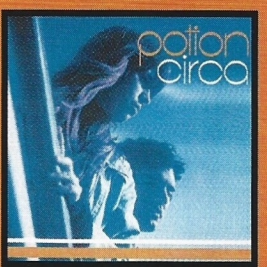

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MOISTBOYZ
III

Despite secluding themselves in the yuppie enclave of New Hope, Pa., as alt-rock's multi-genred something-or-others, fake brethren Ween have made some mighty real, mighty scabby rock songs: big, noisy, rumbling things with genuine fratboy chuckles. That they've maintained as many subheadings as they have nerdish/sheepish lyrical tomes has probably kept audiences from noticing just how damned pernicious and bitter these boys are. Yet nothing sounds quite as vitriolic as Dean Ween's side band Moistboyz. Without the benefit of Zappa-esque sonic blending, Dean (a.k.a. Mickey Moist) and his writing buddy Dickie (real name: Guy Heller) strip the concerns of loserdom, pooping, cigarette butts and other men's women down to the metal bone. The result is aluminum-grade metal; all the misery of Ministry (with voice processors to boot) and an added dash of Cars catchiness. Moistboyz make nice, angry rock, but somehow, a dirt-rock demeanor doesn't completely suit Dean. Without any sonic goofiness around him, all that talk of pickup trucks and pussy seems oddly untoward. The last time Dean was in a pickup truck he was probably hauling around some pricey tchotchkes. Yeah, but I bet they were really rancid tchotchkes. **[Ipecac, www.ipecac.com]**

—A.D. Amorosi

MY DAD IS DEAD
The Engine Of Commerce

Because of indie rock's sudden, enthusiastic rediscovery of Joy Division, it's likely My Dad Is Dead is going to be derided as some sort of hip interloper that's jumping someone else's trend. Don't make that mistake. Mark Edwards has been a player in the crying game since 1984, and *The Engine Of Commerce* is hardly a lame attempt to make bank. Full of maudlin guitar lines, moaning organs and vocals that make Stephin Merritt sound enthusiastic, *Engine* is clearly the work of a man who's seen a lot of life (40 years, if "Stories Left Untold" is to be believed). Yet rather than succumb to glum stereotype, Edwards lets his songs swell with hope and promise. In a winking refutation of the classic Ian Curtis adage, Edwards opens "Labor Of Love" with the lyric "There is nothing that could tear us apart," and even though the Peter Hook bass line is sinister, the sentiment is profoundly endearing. *Engine* is full of moments like these—when sunlight peeks through the chilly music and offers a glimpse of hope. Though there's little on the album that lingers once it's switched off, Edwards' sincerity instills every second of playing time with genuine sweetness. Who knows—in another 20 years, everyone might be rediscovering *him*. **[Vital Cog, www.vitalcog.com]**

—J. Edward Keyes

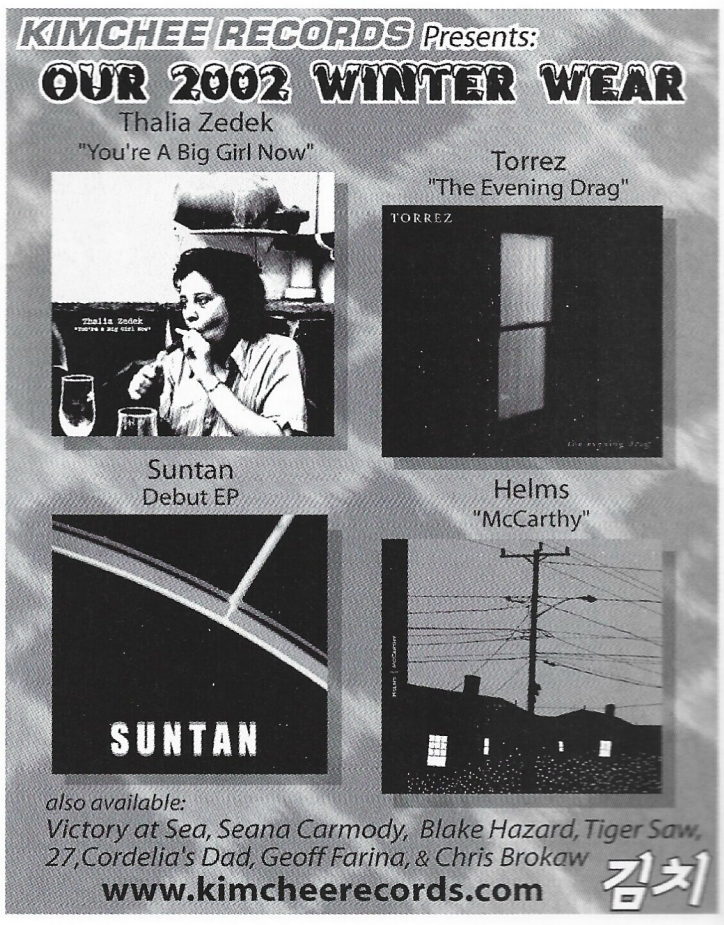
NO KNIFE
Riot For Romance!

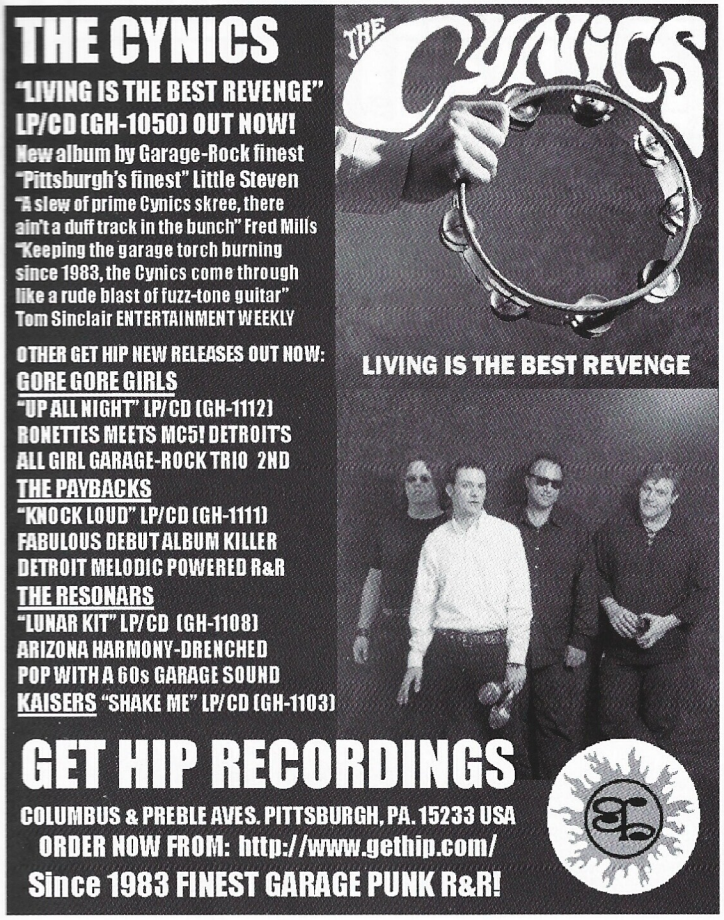
For an album with such an exciting title (complete! with! exclamation! point!), *Riot For Romance!* feels pedestrian. Instead of a burst of energy after a three-year absence, No Knife plays it steady and radio-ready, stepping away from 1999's livelier *Fire In The City Of Automatons*. As its friends in Jimmy Eat World were striking hot iron with heart-on-sleeve emo, No Knife was on the sidelines taking notes. So out comes an uneven set that can't decide whether to aim for the heart or the radio—and probably won't hit either. A couple of songs start off well, but the title track and "Permanent For Now" never move far enough off center to get interesting. Others are more blatant offenders: "Parting Shot" takes on modern-rock radio's fetish for tuneless minor-keyisms and falls flat, and the seeming self-defense of "Brush Off" ("We're seeing everyone pretending to be original by being pigeonholed/We found a way to fill the blank canvas sky") comes off as either arrogant or senselessly knee-jerky. Album-ending ballad "This Moonlife" is the final nail, marrying attempted poetics ("Full sails shape the lives of men") to *faux*-exasperation. There are certain musical situations that require and reward aloofness—that's what "cool" is all about, right?—but when trying to start a riot, particularly one for romance, it's crucial to sound like you mean it. **[Better Looking, www.betterlookingrecords.com]**

—Josh Modell

ONEIDA
Each One Teach One

While Oneida's other records, as good as they are, do little to even hint at the arrival of an album as bold as *Each One Teach One* (originally issued last year as a limited-edition two-LP set), the band's live shows have begged a recording to match them in terms of hypnosis, squall and pure psychedelic meltdown. "Sheets Of Easter," the album's 15-minute opener, wastes no time landing repeated one-note jabs while a single-word incantation subtly mutates and doubles back on itself





PRIMAL SCREAM
EVIL HEAT

Primal Scream's seventh LP in 18 years crawls into view at the same time that fellow Scot Irvine Welsh revisits the original cast of lowlifes from *Trainspotting* in *Porno*, a "reunion" novel of sorts. Coincidence? Perhaps, but a fundamental question connects the two like a rubber tourniquet stretched between teeth and bicep: How much mileage can be squeezed from the "fucked up" thing? As fellow survivors of the rave culture that birthed their most creative moments (1991's *Screamadelica* and 1994's *Trainspotting*, respectively), the Scream and Welsh both bear the scars of re-entry into the workaday world of nine-to-five normalcy, and *Evil Heat* suggests that while there's still gold remaining in the burnout wreckage, the lode is beginning to run thin. The drug-fueled chaos that marked the band's previous output is still present; there's a feral quality that bubbles to the surface of the death-disco "Miss Lucifer," the robot techno of "Detroit" and the garage hip-shake of "Rise" (all noisily produced by My Bloody Valentine guitar alchemist Kevin Shields). But whereas 2000's *XTRMNTR* bristled with politically charged ultraviolence, *Evil Heat* simply tries on every stylistic shoe for size: Robert Plant's harmonica wheezes weakly through the insect blues of "The Lord Is My Shotgun," while other tracks sink without a trace ("Autobahn 66") and the gratuitous cocaine and/or heroin references pile up like cordwood. For all its attempts at hipster currency, *Evil Heat* reveals the needle-shaped creative hole where the drugs used to be. **[Epic]**

—Corey duBrowa

like early Steve Reich in a blender. "Antibiotics" follows hard, drums and organ locking horns (think Deep Purple's Jon Lord jamming with Fela Kuti percussionist Tony Allen) before devolving into feedback guaranteed to give Sonic Youth or a young Grateful Dead solid reason to take cover. On the rest of *Each One Teach One*, Brooklyn-based Oneida replicates the slowing pulse of a dying giant, erecting distorted riff-burgs alongside piano and gongs. This music reveals its beauty with reverberations. Long gone is the '70s cock-rock swagger of 2000's *Come On Everybody Let's Rock*. In its place is a fully formed, mostly instrumental psych masterpiece by a quartet at the peak of its game, unafraid to build entire songs on repetition. Think of krautrock, the Fall, no wave and Mainliner. Then forget every bit of it. Oneida ain't having none of that. **[Jagjaguwar, www.jagjaguwar.com]**

—Bruce Miller

PIANO MAGIC
Writers Without Homes

Throughout its six-year existence, London's Piano Magic has assembled elegant, literate pop music and wistful, atmospheric songs that stayed with you long after they stopped playing. However beautiful the band's five previous (and mostly import-only) albums have been, *Writers Without Homes*—a sprawling wash of lifeless tape loops mixed with xylophones, viola, oboe, piano and spoken-word vocals—is turgid at best. Past elegance gives way to pretentiousness and disconnected ideas. This depression session begins promisingly enough with "(Music Won't Save You From Anything But) Silence," featuring grand, contoured melodies and rigorous percussion. The energy level ends here, though, and not even *Writers*' impressive cast of guests—Tarwater's Ronald Lippok, ex-Cocteau Twin Simon Raymonde and '60s folk

THE REPLACEMENTS

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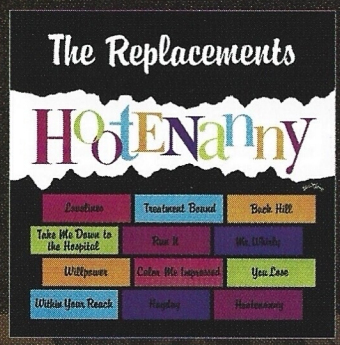
★★★ – Rolling Stone

STINK
★★★★ – Rolling Stone



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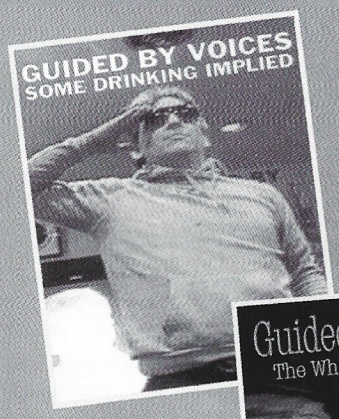

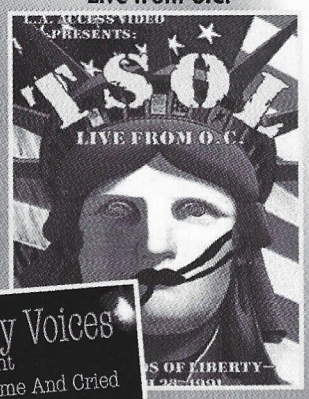

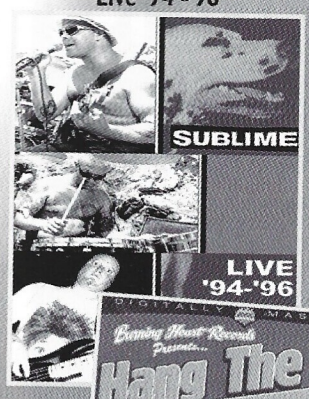

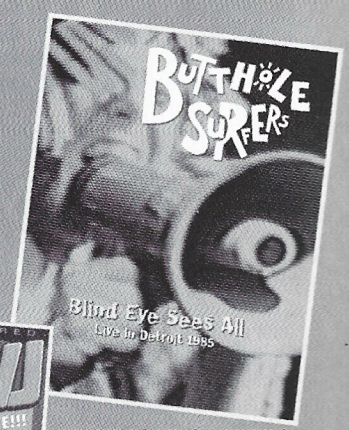

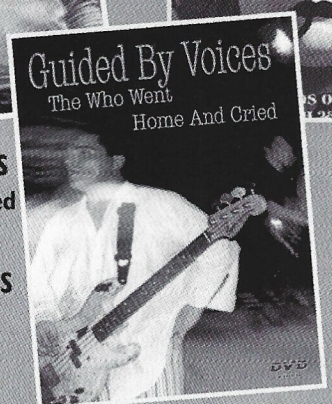

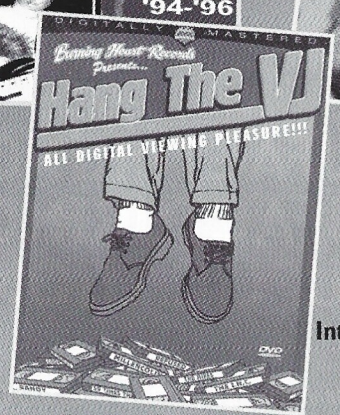

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SAINT ETIENNE
FINISTERRE

After tossing about myriad special interests (soundtrack work, journalism, parenthood), the trio of Bob Stanley, Pete Wiggs and Sarah Cracknell returns to the loving arms of über-pop with *Finisterre*. Pop like Abba, pop like Ladytron, pop like Donna Summer and pop like Saint Etienne. This isn't to downplay a band that's a conceptual maze of cultural esoterica, lint-naveled music-nerd fanaticism and Anglophile pride. The skies will open up and rain money, Percodan, baked talapia and Dusty Springfield records, and Cracknell's voice will be the air-raid siren to this event—or to whatever your particular vision of Valhalla might be. "Action" and "Shower Science" evoke images of gesticulating, tropical party people stuffed to the gills on powerful stimulants, saying nonsense into the E! *Wild On* cameras. Performing pop music's duty to a T, I'd say. Before you entertain the notion that Saint Etienne can be satisfied with the singular sound of flawless ass-shakers, the past half-decade of new electro gets its comeuppance with "Amateur" and "Rock Palast," underground British hip hop awkwardly slaps you around for a spell ("Soft Like Me") and guest vocalist Sarah Churchill pulls an Arab Strap spoken-mumble for the soothing title track. All of it is sewn together with slower tunes that would put both Sade and Brian Wilson's noses in the rulebook.

Stanley took a few minutes from a relaxing Saturday afternoon to chat about trends, TV and onstage group-hug sessions.

Saint Etienne has always championed Eurodisco and electro, so how does the "electrosplosion" of the past few years strike you?

It makes me feel good. I've always liked the music that it draws from, obviously, but now it's cool to like the Human League when it used to be embarrassing. It will soon be embarrassing again, I'll bet you.

British actor Michael Jayston is heard speaking in between every track on *Finisterre*. Are those sampled soundbites?

He actually came around and read the text for the album—old advertising slogans and such ... and a quote at the end of the album about Alan McGee and Jeff Barrett—something an old A&R man of ours said once.

So it's not soundbites from *Highlander III* or anything?

[*Laughs*] No, no. I'd forgotten that he was in that! Pete is a huge *Doctor Who* fan, and he was in the third wave, but I mainly know him from a TV show called *A Bit Of A Do*.

Speaking of McGee and Barrett, how was your short stint on Creation Records?

We felt like we were playing second or fourth or fifth fiddle to some other acts and that perhaps [the label] didn't really like what we were doing. They were good people, but it was a mess over there.

The first single ("Action") is getting very positive press in the U.K.

Yes, the reviews over here have been great. Then, in Sweden, the opinion is polarized, and Australia has apparently gone mad for it, so we're going to tour Australia soon. We had our first stage invasion the other night. One person got up onstage, and suddenly, dancing, marauding fans invaded the whole stage. Security just threw up their hands. **[Mantra/Beggars Banquet, www.beggars.com]**

—Andrew Earles

chanteuse Vashti Bunyan—can stop the refined gloom and precocious unhappiness from setting in. Suzy Mangion (of the Manchester band George) lends her child-like quaver of a voice to "Postal," which is grating enough to be retitled "Going Postal." "The Season Is Long" starts with a distant crack of thunder and the sound of falling rain and ends nine minutes later, well past the point of rigor mortis. Previous Piano Magic efforts required a patient commitment that reaped bountiful musical rewards. Repeat listens to *Writers* yield only increased disappointment. **[4AD/ Beggars Banquet, www.beggars.com]**

—John Elsasser

MATT POND PA
The Nature Of Maps

Matt Pond is a scholar. He has a Ph.D. in pain, an education in the sad-eyed and sullen scenes that you can only find staring at your bedroom wall. So why is it that his time at the school of soft rock has been relegated to know-it-all answers from the back of the classroom? The term "critics' darling" comes to mind, but I'm fearful to use it. You see, his latest album is quite lovely—filled with meditations on life, love and Philadelphia—but it would be foolish to toss it off as mere fodder for picky rock scribes. He'd like to teach the world to sing, after all, and nothing screams "notice me" quite like a pretty pop song. *Nature* is filled with them: some sulking and Pernice Brothers-like ("No More"), others bubbling under with vibraphone-enhanced atmosphere ("Closer") or skipping along sarcastically to the beat ("A Million Middle Fingers"). Yes, there will be strings and lots of aching melodies—this is bedhead pop at its finest. But to continue to sleep on Pond at this late in the game would be, well, stupid. Wake up: Class is in session. **[Polyvinyl, www.polyvinylrecords.com]**

—Trevor Kelley

Q AND NOT U
Different Damage

You've got to love a band with a grammar yen. Two songs on Q And Not U's sophomore slab namecheck that crafty comma. Sure, the punk-tuation of choice has long been the exclamation point, but this angular neu-punk trio makes a point of the well-placed pause. *Different Damage* kicks off with "Soft Pyramids," which feels Joan Of Arc off-kilter, mostly drums/bass/synth with a smattering of clean-channel guitar. Have these guys gone all Tim Kinsella kooky? Yeah, a little bit. *Different Damage*—successor to 2000's frantic-ass *No Kill No Beep Beep*—presents a somewhat subdued take on its dancey D.C. hardcore. The bizarre sentiment of "So Many Animal Calls," a sort of hospital-as-zoo metaphor, is floated nicely atop a herky-jerk bed of guitars and synth, while "Air Conditions" feels like it was left off Fugazi's *The Argument*. Where Q And Not U excels is in letting you think you can dance to its stop/start/go-another-direction punk, then pulling the rug out from beneath your shuffling feet. About half the songs are dead-on. While the rest hint at where they thought they were going, it leaves you hoping Q And Not U will dot all the i's and cross the t's next time out. **[Dischord, www.dischord.com]**

—Brian Howard

KIMBERLEY REW
Great Central Revisited

Except for the fact he co-wrote almost none of those classic Soft Boys songs from more than 20 years ago, Kimberley Rew might've been considered the band's Paul McCartney to Robyn Hitchcock's John Lennon. Rew's keen sense of pop melody kept his subsequent combo, Katrina And The Waves, afloat long after 1985's "Walking On Sunshine," and it made his 2000 solo outing, *Tunnel Into Summer*, a jangling delight. *Great Central Revisited*, more like a scrapbook of places and heroes near to Rew's heart, has no such thumbprint. The eerie, Softs-like harmonies of "Life Itself" leave no doubt where Rew first hung his shingle, but you'd swear the ringing "English Road" came from Rockpile. "EC Blues" is a jaunty anthem about the 1960 car-crash death of rockabilly star Eddie Cochran. "Screaming Lord Sutch," on the other hand, mournfully details this lifelong depression victim (and eventual suicide) who hid his pain behind a mask of onstage rock 'n' roll lunacy. Rew saves his best line ("Like the surgeon said, 'Cutting off your legs won't make you paint like Toulouse-Lautrec'") for "Sick Of Hearing About Your Drugs," a track with Hitchcock on lysergic slide guitar. It's a lyrical touch of the absurd not heard in Blighty since the heyday of Hitchcock himself. **[Bongo Beat, www.bongobeat.com]**

—Jud Cost

RUINS
Tzomborgha

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE & THE MELTING PARAISO U.F.O.
Electric Heavyland

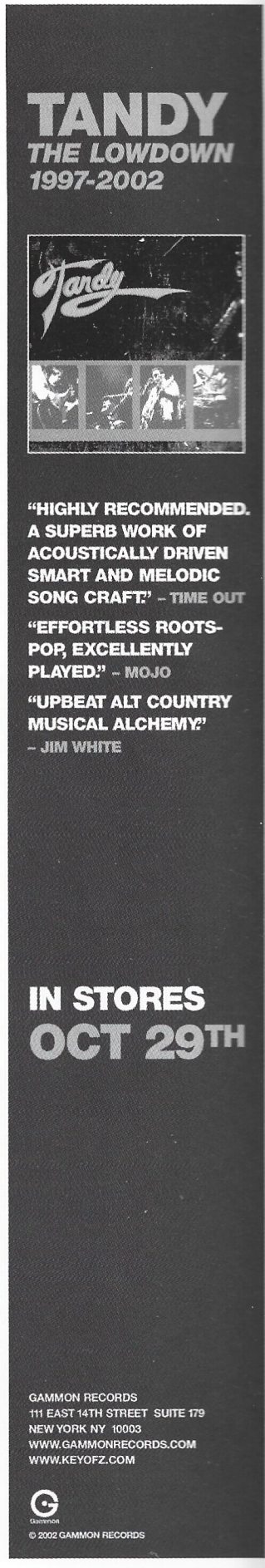
There's a bucketload of sonic examples to prove the extremity of Japanese musicians: Kabuki music's rhythmic density and overtones of pain, the ear-splitting noise of turntable terrorist Otomo Yoshihide, the Boredoms' vivisections, the fractured pop of Shonen Knife and Pizzicato 5 and the daffodils-in-summer innocence of Nagisa Ni Te and Maher Shalal Hash Baz. It's a shared heritage alongside an ability to gut and inspect Western popular music's every nuance that connect Ruins and Acid Mothers Temple to the aforementioned bands, if not to one another. The former is a duo that's crept from Algebra 2 to Advanced Trigonometry over a decade's worth of releases. *Tzomborgha* finds drummer Yoshida Tasuya and bassist Sasaki Hishashi shoving Robert Fripp and James Brown into a tree chopper while saluting Zappa's confident note-iness and blasting the whole thing with thrash metal's punishment. Eventually, Ruins plow through every memorable Sabbath riff in two minutes, then dissect the Mahavishnu Orchestra in the same amount of time. Not quite roasting in comparable duo Lightning Bolt's fiery furnace, this is drum 'n' bass without the booty. Tight? Like a fat man's personal space in a Moroccan medina.

Tasuya and Acid Mothers guitarist Makoto Kawabata were once two-thirds of Blue Cheer-in-a-volcano trio Mainliner. Aside from that, the two musicians' core bands seem to hail from opposing planets. With *Electric Heavyland*, Kawabata and his four key partners in acute psychedelia go for throats. Titles like "Atomic Rotary Grinding God" and "Phantom Of Galactic Magnum" say it all. Musically, this could've happened 30 years ago. Yet it's Acid Mothers' decision to push this recording well beyond the red (with the intent to make some eardrums bleed) that allows *Electric Heavyland* a chance in a cage match with Merzbow. This may be the most ferocious rock 'n' roll squall conceivable. Ever. **[Ipecac, www.ipecac.com; Alien 8, www.alien8recordings.com]**

—Bruce Miller

SEA AND CAKE
One Bedroom

In every family, there's the one dotty relative who never changes. Once a year, you sit in her immaculate living room with the vinyl covers on the sofa, listening to the old-fashioned clock chime the hours until you can leave. It's not that the experience is unpleasant—she serves you cookies and ginger ale—but more that it's predictable. This is what plagues the sixth full-length from the Sea And Cake. This group of Chicago notables seems stuck in the laid-



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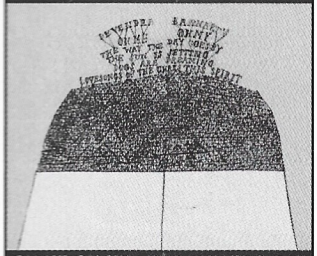
DEVENDRA BANHART



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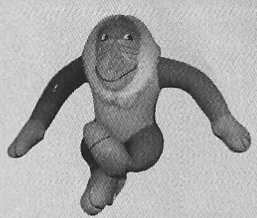

M A X I M I N

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back grooves and soft-shell pop of albums like 1997's *The Fawn* and 2000's *Oui*. Sam Prekop has honed and refined his vocal skills, but he still sounds breathy and out of his range. He creates some nice convoluted guitar/electronics interplay with Archer Prewitt on tracks like "Hotel Tell," and John McEntire and Eric Claridge explore funky rhythms on "Shoulder Length"—but neither experiment seems to have much direction or focus. The best moments are isolated instances of circumstantial noise: keyboard tones descending in high-pitched cascades on a cover of Bowie's "Sound And Vision," a dialing and ringing phone on the title track. *One Bedroom* is an agreeable album, full of pretty melodies and assorted bric-a-brac that pleases the ear; it's just hard to listen to the Sea And Cake live with plastic on the furniture for yet another year. **[Thrill Jockey, www.thrilljockey.com]**

—Tizzy Asher

SHIMMER KIDS UNDERPOP ASSOCIATION

The Natural Riot

Worlds collide when San Francisco's Shimmer Kids lug their well-stickered steamer trunk of sunshine-drenched melodies into the studio, then dress them up to see how they'll play to the captive audience aboard NASA's space station. Although the Kids have filled in the blank spaces with everything from xylophone and theremin to melodica and bells, it's their delightful keyboard work that tosses a monkey wrench into the works every chance it gets. "Model Kit" sounds like one of those Jan & Dean ballads floating on the interplanetary ivory-tickling of space rockers Windy & Carl. "Like Candy, Like Poison" pits garage Farfisa against a horn section that can't decide whether it's been hired for a ganja-drenched session in Jamaica or backing Neil Diamond down at the local hockey arena. "Burning Bridges" sums up the Kids' Elephant 6-meets-*Animal House* oeuvre as well as anything. Heavily reverbed handclaps and a Chinese funeral gong send this Salvation Army Band far off the parade route and straight into the judges' stand as police cars, tricked-out with theremin sirens, arrive way too late for a loose-lipped trumpeter to sound his Gabriel-like call to armageddon. **[Hidden Agenda, www.parasol.com]**

—Jud Cost

SIGUR RÓS

( )

Like a lover so skilled at delaying orgasm that the holding-back becomes the center of gratification, Iceland's future-prog torchbearer is all about caressing the G spot and prolonging the moment into infinity. This isn't so much precious as logical; with sex being the national pastime in the cold Scandinavian countries, sensuality in the arts is assumed to be a core value, too. Sigur Rós occupies a space somewhere between the free-soaring folk jazz of Tim Buckley, the aquatic ethereality of the Cocteau Twins and the oceanic post-rock of Mogwai, all practitioners of sustain and release. Impressionistic, gospel-styled vocals are sung in the made-up Hopelandic language (speaking of precious, www.sigur-ros.com operates as a companion to the album and includes fans' lyrical interpretations like "you sigh inside," "a candle in the thighs" and "the waters of the heart"), while the instrumentation arrives in vast, dense, Radiohead-plays-Pink Floyd waves. Sigur Rós can appear overly earnest, and since the band rarely climaxes in the traditional rock sense, the casual listener may regard *( )* as little more than background music. Near the end of the 10-minute fifth track (there are no song titles), there's an orchestral swell of massed strings and church organ, surging drone-guitars and crashing percussion, but as with the aforementioned lover, the band quickly pulls back and resumes its sonic caress. Only at the very end of the 72-minute *( )* does Sigur Rós summon up genuine release. But for those versed in patience and trust, well, ecstasy *should* be fleeting. That way, when you finally grasp it, it's all the more monumental. **[MCA]**

—Fred Mills

STEEL POLE BATH TUB

Unlistenable

Be warned. This record isn't for mass consumption unless you enjoy samples from some weird, experimental-noise orgy to the next *Hellraiser* flick. Riding the coattails of the post-*Nevermind* signing boom (which saw the majors gobbling up musically adventurous acts like the Butthole Surfers, Cop Shoot Cop and Melvins), Steel Pole Bath Tub seemed as likely a choice as any. Recorded in 1996, these 19 rough-and-raw demos were deemed "unlistenable" by the band's commercial sponsor (Slash/London), which accused this long-time Bay Area threesome of delivering a "soundtrack to nothing." The band stuck to its noise-punk roots and considered it revolutionary; Slash/London canned the group. No band has come close to matching the muscular avalanche of distorted guitars, heavily processed vocals and teeth-rattling rhythms synonymous with every Steel Pole Bath Tub effort including *Unlistenable*. "What I Need" is a bone-jarring, psychedelic excursion of sampled voices and thick guitar sludge that conjures images of a giant goldfish bowl filled with liquid opium; "Re-Juvenilated" is a terror-laced noise-stomp of industrial-strength guitar and megaphone enhanced screeching; and "The Good Times" is a buzzing hornet's nest of grating six-string exploitation, electronic overdubs and slamming percussion equivalent to a shoegazer's wet dream. *Unlistenable* is a horrific and thoroughly invigorating listen from a bygone era of grunge, noise and sonic exploration. **[Zero To One, www.0to1.net]**

—Ron Bally

TAHITI 80

Wallpaper For The Soul

Easy listening has never been this painful. Hell, even Ray Conniff knew the definition of a sell-by date. But Tahiti 80, an approximation of Angela Faye Tillett (Death By Chocolate) minus the irksome interludes about lemon slacks and sugar lumps, has worn out its welcome. Xavier Boyer and his Parisian pop cronies create schmaltzy songs best suited to karaoke with an inebriated Uncle Lester, but the group's sophomore LP takes the trophy in department-store dreck. *Wallpaper For The Soul* prances gaily through caramelized orchestrations akin to the pasty beats, synth doodles and cutie-pie kitsch of the Softies and Shonen Knife. Only Tahiti 80 lacks the carefree charm true twee-poppers wear on ruffled sleeves. Boyer's ditsy vocals quiver through 12 lackluster tracks, swirling in nostalgia for bygone eras and paying homage to many a British burnout (Michael Brown, Ray Davies, Colin Blunstone) against a backdrop of woozy psychedelia and sprightly hooks. The title track crawls like a slow-motion elevator through a silver corridor of heavenly clouds and crashes when Tahiti 80 falls victim to its bogus formula. Which makes "Happy End," an airy gem that reeks of the Cardigans and Ivy on spin-cycle, stand out like a whore at a Donna Reed dinner party. If only Boyer and Co. were bright-eyed Japanese girls, their smarminess would be sufferable. **[Minty Fresh, www.mintyfresh.com]**

—Ashlea Halpern

VELVET CRUSH

Soft Sounds

After paring down from a trio, Velvet Crush recorded *Soft Sounds* as an almost-solo act, with Paul Chastain playing just about everything and Ric Menck adding drums to

SUICIDE
AMERICAN SUPREME

From their 1970 start to their present-day resurrection as pre-punk godfathers of noise, NYC dads of dissonance Alan Vega and Martin Rev have made Suicide pure iconoclasm: seething electronic music without compromise. Despite touches of latter-day Coltrane, Stooges and Sun-style Presley in its savage sound, there's little recognizable in Suicide's white-knuckle noise. Even at the height of Manhattan's CBGB '70s, Suicide stood apart from punk's prettier pack; other groups' aggressive tendencies paled in comparison to a duo that could cause epilepsy with repeated listenings. On *American Supreme*, Suicide's first album in a dog's age, there's a softer edge to the group's spookhouse minimalism. It's the same kind of gentle jarring visible previously on Rev's 1979 eponymous solo LP (which was recently reissued by the ROIR label.) As evident on *American Supreme*, Rev's musical intent is—like Miles Davis muting a devil's horn through *Bitches Brew*—still heart-poundingly hot. The speedhouse "Swearin' To The Flag," the skronky electro "Beggin' For Miracles," the rubbery "Power Au Go-Go" and "Dachau, Disney, Disco" are pock-marked by Vega's raw texts stammered in a tone that makes the word "haunted" seem saccharine.

Vega spoke to MAGNET from his home in New York City.

The first thing I notice that's new is, well, Rev's music and your phrasing. It's pretty shocking—to hear something so often collage-hip-hoppish without sounding trite.

It threw me. It sounded like Suicide. But it was different, even difficult, for me to come to terms with. He gave me 25 pieces to start. Mostly keyboards with drum and bass. I whittled them down to 14. But it was weird, like these James Brown riffs. "Wait a minute," I said. I wasn't going to do them. Even his wife was weirded out; they were a real mashed-potatoes sound—from Motown to Thelonious Monk.

What felt new for you about Rev's writing?

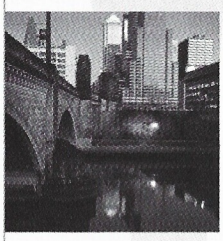
Everything was faster. He's playing differently, physically. When you watch him now, as opposed to playing minimal music with stiff arms, he's flailing around like Jerry Lee Lewis. There's a lot more sounds coming at you a lot faster. Then one day, I stood up and did "I Don't Know" with an even quicker stream-of-conscious approach than usual. Every song after that, I nailed immediately—and with a different singing style. And Marty, he laid down 36 tracks of music flawlessly in three hours and 15 minutes. No mistakes. No overdubbing. He's a machine. My jaw dropped.

The record has the same sense of danger previous works did. But there's a new emotionalism. I hate this question, but I know you live near the World Trade Center and had been recording before and after last September ...

I lived through that hell. There was so much before 9/11 that I just couldn't say lyrically. Couldn't do love songs. They came off like Barry White. We got older, broader. We both have kids. There's more colors to us now, a wider range of emotions. Figure it this way: We've been saying the same thing for 30 years. We were never talking about *our* suicide. We were always talking about the world's suicide. That's what we do. That's me and Marty. **[Mute, www.mute.com]**

—A.D. Amorosi

DENISONWITMER PHILADELPHIA SONGS



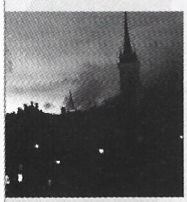
On Philadelphia Songs, Denison Witmer paints a haunting and beautiful picture of memories, people, and places. The album features a host of guest musicians and Philadelphians. as well as members of The Six Parts Seven (Suicide Squeeze Records). Philadelphia Songs, his third full-length, was recorded in Philadelphia at home by friend Scott French and at Soundgun studios by Edan Cohen **(Songs: Ohia, Jim & Jenny & the Pinetops).**

The instrumentation is rich and deep, adding an ambient feel to Witmer's songs that has not been fully explored until this album. From the nostalgic romanticism of "Sets of Keys" to the heart- breaking "24 turned 25" to the MiniDisc hotel piano field recording on "St. Cecilia (Ode to Music)," the words and sounds form a tapestry that reflects Philadelphia from Denison's point of view.

Other albums by Denison Witmer ::
(Safe Away, River Bends, The 80's ep, of joy & sorrow) ;

Other Releases ::

Circle of Birds ::: s/t cdep/10"
these songs are highly melodic, cinematic, and fragile, serving as a snapshot of the weekend recording session featuring members of Unwed Sailor, Ester Drang, and Lasso. the result is a spectacular instrumental ep that combines the airy, orchestrated sounds of Ester Drang with the energetic indie approach of Unwed Sailor and just a hint of cowboy inspired country aesthetic from Lasso members. the recordings were carefully mixed by Pedro the Lion's David Bazan and Johnathon Ford. Also available, Ester Drang's Goldenwest full-length cd.



Unwed Sailor ::: The Faithful Anchor cd/LP
the full-length release from Unwed Sailor re-issued on cd and vinyl. the band captures its trademark melodic, instrumental, energetic sound, mixing in Eno-esque ambience and adding just a hint of experimentalism. also available, Unwed Sailor's Firecracker debut cdep/7".
Unwed Sailor ::: The Marionette and The Music Box cd/LP/limited cd, March 2003.

Damien Jurado ::: Four Songs 12" ep
sub pop singer/songwriter offering up four new melancholy folk songs on a 12" LP, the complimentary antithesis of his scorching rock record. the obverse is an etching featuring a short story from author adam voith.

Coming Soon :::
One-Sided LPs from Aspera, Early Day Miners, Yume Bitsu, The Six Parts Seven, and Ester Drang. Spring 2003.
All American Radio full-length cd, Winter 2003
Ester Drang full-length cd/LP, March 2003
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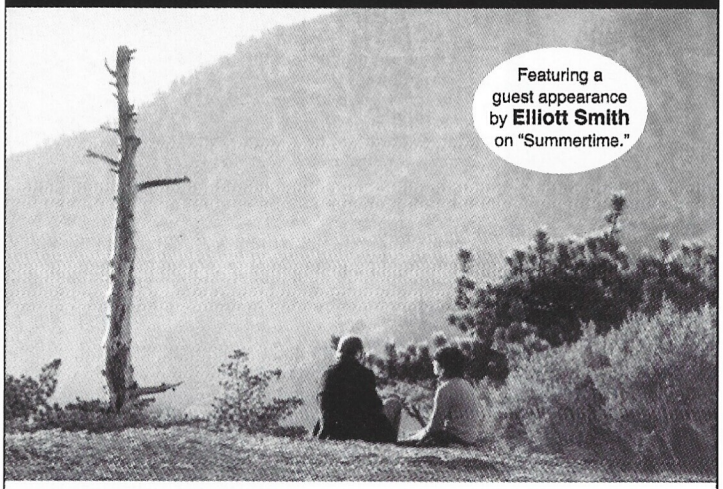
Goldenboy Blue Swan Orchestra



Goldenboy features guitarist/vocalist Shon Sullivan (Spain, Elliott Smith, Neil Finn), bassist David McConnell (mix engineer/producer for Elliott Smith, Wilco, Folk Implosion) and drummer Bryan Bos (Moonwash).

Fans of Elliott Smith, Grandaddy, and Belle & Sebastian will appreciate the quirky and haunting elegant garage pop found on this debut CD, Blue Swan Orchestra.

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half of the tracks. Produced by longtime Crush collaborator Matthew Sweet, the sounds here are so soft they almost disappear, with a gentle nod to light '60 pop, as if they've been ready-made for oblivion. It sure ain't the new loud. Even at high volume, *Soft Sounds* barely makes an impact, with its wispy vocals, loungey keyboards and lazy hi-hat. Sure, the surfaces are pretty in that AM-radio kind of way, but there's no tension anywhere on the album, no compelling reason to keep listening. That's why I listen to Sweet—or to the earlier edition of Velvet Crush: to feel the conflict underneath all that prettiness, to be moved by the emotional complexity of such simple music. Even though *Soft Sounds*' liner notes talk about how Chastain thought these songs were too sad, too personal to ever release, I can't hear them speaking above a whisper. That's too bad, because the melodies are beautiful, and they deserve more. **[Action Musik/Parasol, www.parasol.com]**

—Kenny Berkowitz

WACO BROTHERS
New Deal

To The Last Dead Cowboy, the Waco Brothers' 1995 debut LP, was a breath of fresh air—or, to more accurately reflect their fiery approach and incendiary gigs, a blowtorch—to the already-bloated alt-country genre. Wayward Mekon and transplanted Chicagoan Jon Langford and his motley cast of hometown characters simultaneously celebrated traditional country and danced on its grave, combining bar-band grit and honky-tonk reverence with Langford's stick-it-to-the-man class politics. Subsequent releases (in particular, 1997's *Cowboy In Flames*) have nicely followed suit, but *New Deal* is the first mildly stagnant Wacos effort. All of the usual ingredients are here—especially the fine chops and indomitable spirit—but a been-there, done-that vibe creeps in. Still, it speaks to just how likable these guys are that *New Deal* remains highly entertaining. It's impossible not to enjoy Langford's acerbic wordplay on nuggets like "Poison" ("It's time to pour poison where the crystal waters flow/It's time to break wind where your shrinking violets grow"), and guitarist Dean Schlabowske's Chicago slam ("No Heart") is as honest and resigned as it is bitter. *New Deal* is a fine listen, though it will be interesting to see whether the Wacos continue to evolve or if the record is a sign of a band slowly becoming old hat. **[Bloodshot, www.bloodshotrecords.com]**

—Matt Hickey

WARLOCKS
Phoenix

Phoenix is an album definitely geared toward hallucinogenic-drug imbibers. The second LP from this psychedelic-marinated Los Angeles seven-piece screams out to space-rock freaks and shoegazing geeks everywhere. Definite touchstones range from early Pink Floyd and the Velvet Underground to Spacemen 3 and the Brian Jonestown Massacre (Warlocks frontman Bobby Hecksher once served in BJM). Opening track "Shake The Dope Out" is the band's answer to "I'm Waiting For The Man," complete with raging, fuzz-drenched guitars and creepy, elementary keyboards. A tsunami of crashing instrumentation punctuates the lo-fi psylocibin nightmare "Hurricane Heart," on which distortion-guitar freakout commingles flawlessly with swelling rhythms lifted from the playbook of the 13th Floor Elevators. The 10-minute "Cosmic Letdown" ambles like a recurring narcotic journey to the center of the mind of a Summer Of Love acid casualty. Fittingly, the Warlocks' unrelenting instrumental passages and ensemble chops roar with a guttural '60s garage-psych mentality that never seems remotely faked or kitschy. On the pure adrenaline rush of "The Dope Feels Good," the animated instrumental attack and the dual themes of decadence and the thrill of the needle may cause you to break down and weep. This absorbing twilight zone closes with droning instrumental "Oh Shadie," on which a reflection of a face in the mirror melts before your eyes like a puddle of plastic goop a quarter of a century removed from reality. **[Birdman, www.birdmanrecords.com]**

—Ron Bally

WE RAGAZZI
The Ache

We Ragazzi, with its new boy/boy/girl lineup and sans-Farfisa sophomore LP, is primed to set Chicago ablaze. *The Ache* stomps its way down a blues-soaked Bourbon Street, picking up women and sucking on chicken bones, but ultimately lands in the lap of the new new-wavers. Frontman Anthony Rolando merges Hot Hot Heat's twitchiness with Billy Corgan's bleak effeminacy for an earnest howl that strains and cracks like Bobcat Goldthwait explaining the function of the fallopian tubes to a bingo hall full of blue-haired ladies. White-hot guitar licks and sub-zero synths streamline Rolando's smoldering vocals, setting the stage for an impassioned rendezvous with a jug of cheap

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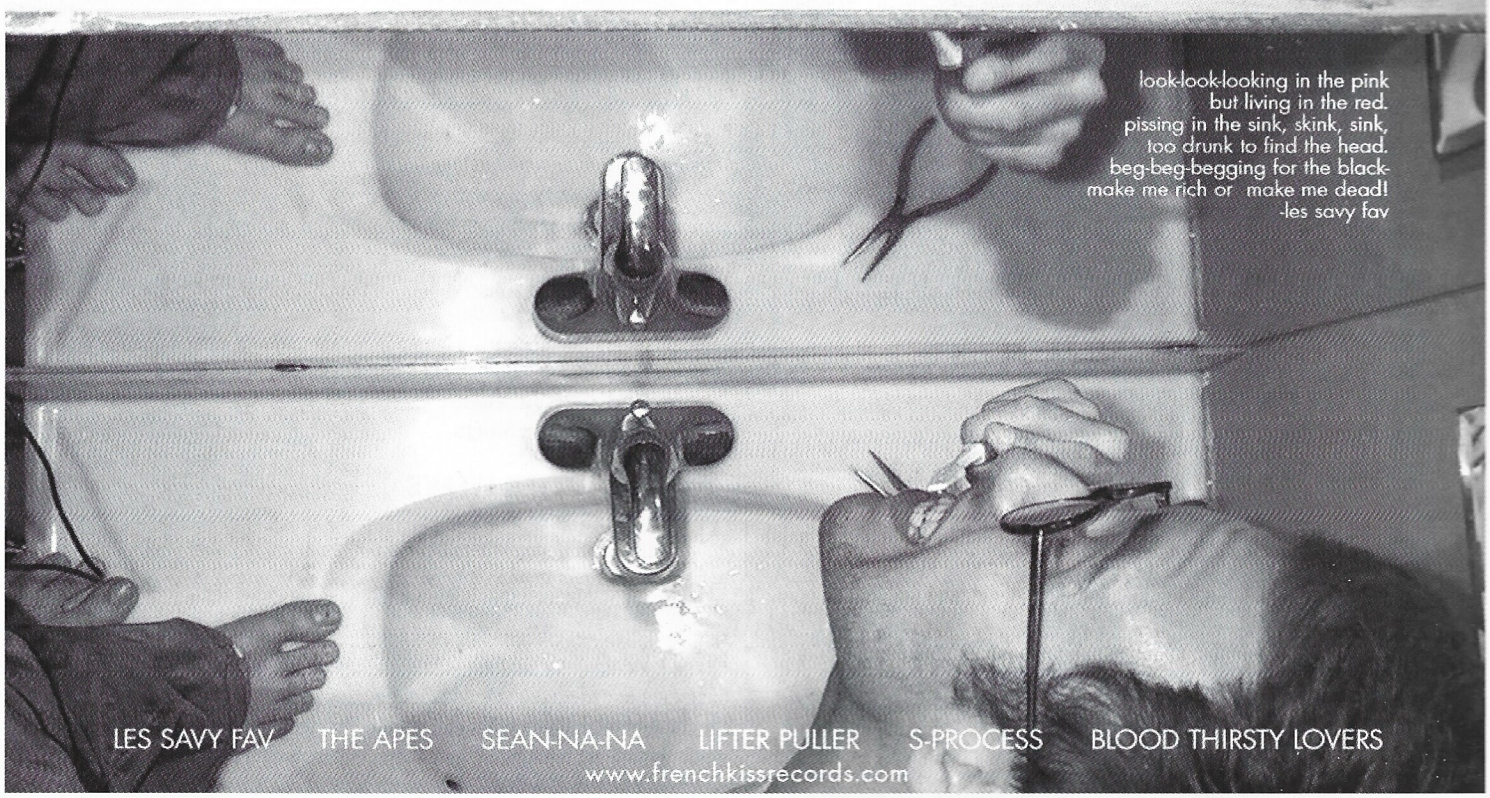

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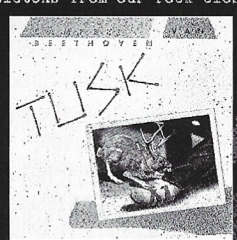
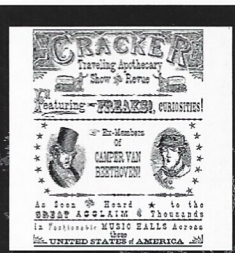
A song-for-song cover of the infamous Fleetwood Mac Pulling our leg or pulling us aboard the good ship lollipop, with the help of an old 4-track and a Macintosh, CVB opens a portal and unleashes the skeletons from our rock closet.





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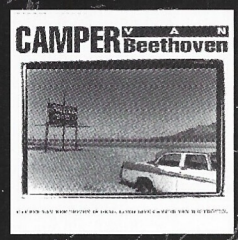

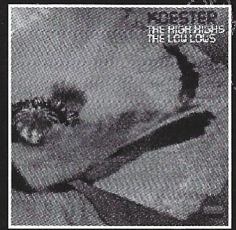

KOESTER
THE HIGH HIGHS
THE LOW LOWS

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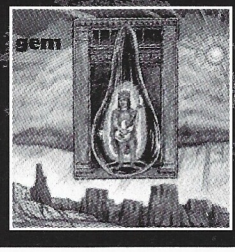
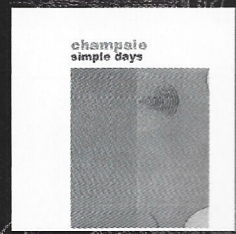
CMJ New Music Monthly says:
"'One Day You Too Will Bleed' is perhaps one of the best break-up songs of all time."

GEM
SUNGLARE SERENADES

Doug Gillard (Guitar)and Tim Tobias (Bass) Of Guided By Voices.
Yeah,yeah ,yeah we all love GBV, but this album steps from the shadows and fizzes with a life of its own. Foot soldiers strike out on their own and wind up winning the war!





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wine. This will clearly be a night spent chucking steak knives at fine china. Not one to mince words, Rolando wants what he wants (your tongue, his ear, now), bleating and moaning his way through the effervescent "Forever In The First Stages Of Love." An air of Ian Svenonius cool combined with garage rock's cocksure arrogance carries We Ragazzi through nine tracks that'd make Joliet Jake Blues proud. Break out the black suits and skinny white ties—the temperature is a-rising in this joint. **[Self-Starter Foundation, www.selfstarterfoundation.com]**

—Ashlea Halpern

DENISON WITMER
Philadelphia Songs

BITTER, BITTER WEEKS
Bitter, Bitter Weeks

Philadelphia singer/songwriters Denison Witmer and Brian McTear might consider including sample packets of anti-depressants with their next records to help ward off the condition Winston Churchill once described as "the black dog." Although the cover of *Philadelphia Songs* makes the grade as fine art (striking Philly photos courtesy of Brady Sanders), there's no need to pore over the libretto to know what's going on here musically. Almost everything on Witmer's third album is a love song to someone who, by the third or fourth chorus, has left him and definitely won't be coming back. Witmer—whose voice bears a fleeting resemblance to Tim Buckley's—could probably create an overwhelming sense of heartbreak by singing selections from a restaurant menu. Spare-yet-simpatico accompaniment is provided here by members of the Six Parts Seven. Be forewarned: Like carbon monoxide from a faulty wall furnace, Witmer's fragile tenor may overcome you.

McTear, best known as a studio engineer (Burning Brides, Bigger Lovers) and member of Mazarin (whose Quentin Stoltzfus lends a hand here), has slid even farther down the slippery slope of mental health under the tattered canopy of Bitter, Bitter Weeks. His pinched narrative on "Daylight Savings Is Over" might recall Paul Simon's solo work, but there are no jaunty odes to Kodak found here. "I'm old at 25, but I always hear these are the best days of my life," moans McTear on "The Best Days Of My Life." You probably wouldn't ask someone who sings, "A fear like a thousand trucks all barreling, some loaded with sparks and some with gasoline, ready to burn until there's nothing left of me" (as McTear does on "You Paralyze My Heart") to babysit the kids. But, like open-heart surgery on TV, it's almost impossible to avert your eyes. Neither album is recommended for the terminally morose. Bullet-proof vests not included. **[Burnt Toast Vinyl, www.burnttoastvinyl.com; My Pal God, www.mypalgodrecords.com]**

—Jud Cost

WOVEN HAND
Woven Hand

Jesus rock, terminally misunderstood, still doesn't get any respect, whether the sub-genre is punk (identikit-clad skateboarders for Jesus), indie (angry, foul-mouthed "outsiders" like Pedro The Lion) or mainstream (Creed is the garish new Heritage USA, Scott Stapp its Tammy Faye Bakker). Not to mention lingering suspicions that Christians want to brainwash us heathens into smiling, tract-passing drones going door-to-door. Sixteen Horsepower's David Eugene Edwards stands somewhat askew to all this but makes no secret of his faith; unfortunately his lyrical message, unless carefully attended, frequently gets overshadowed by the apocalyptic ferocity of his band's music. With the solo *Woven Hand*, however, he rolls away all stones, spelling things out in the first lines of the first song: "I am nothing without His Ghost within." Edwards witnesses for his faith on "The Good Hand" and nine other serene, atmospheric numbers (all performed almost entirely by him), songs generally less strident and more acoustic-based than 16HP's material—think Nick Cave's Bad Seeds exiled to Appalachia. Edwards' witnessing may involve confessing his own weak-flesh frailties ("Glass Eye," "Story And Pictures"), casting parables ("Blue Pail Fever," a stranger-in-a-strange-land yarn) or even probing the subtext of another writer's fall-from-grace chronicle (a riveting cover of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine"). But these aren't idle ruminations on Edwards' part. They are concerns that occupy him 100 percent, and by additionally framing them in such compelling, tuneful musical contexts, his messages of faith stand a good chance of reaching their intended audience. **[Sounds Familyre, www.danielson-famile.com/soundsfamilyre]**

—Fred Mills

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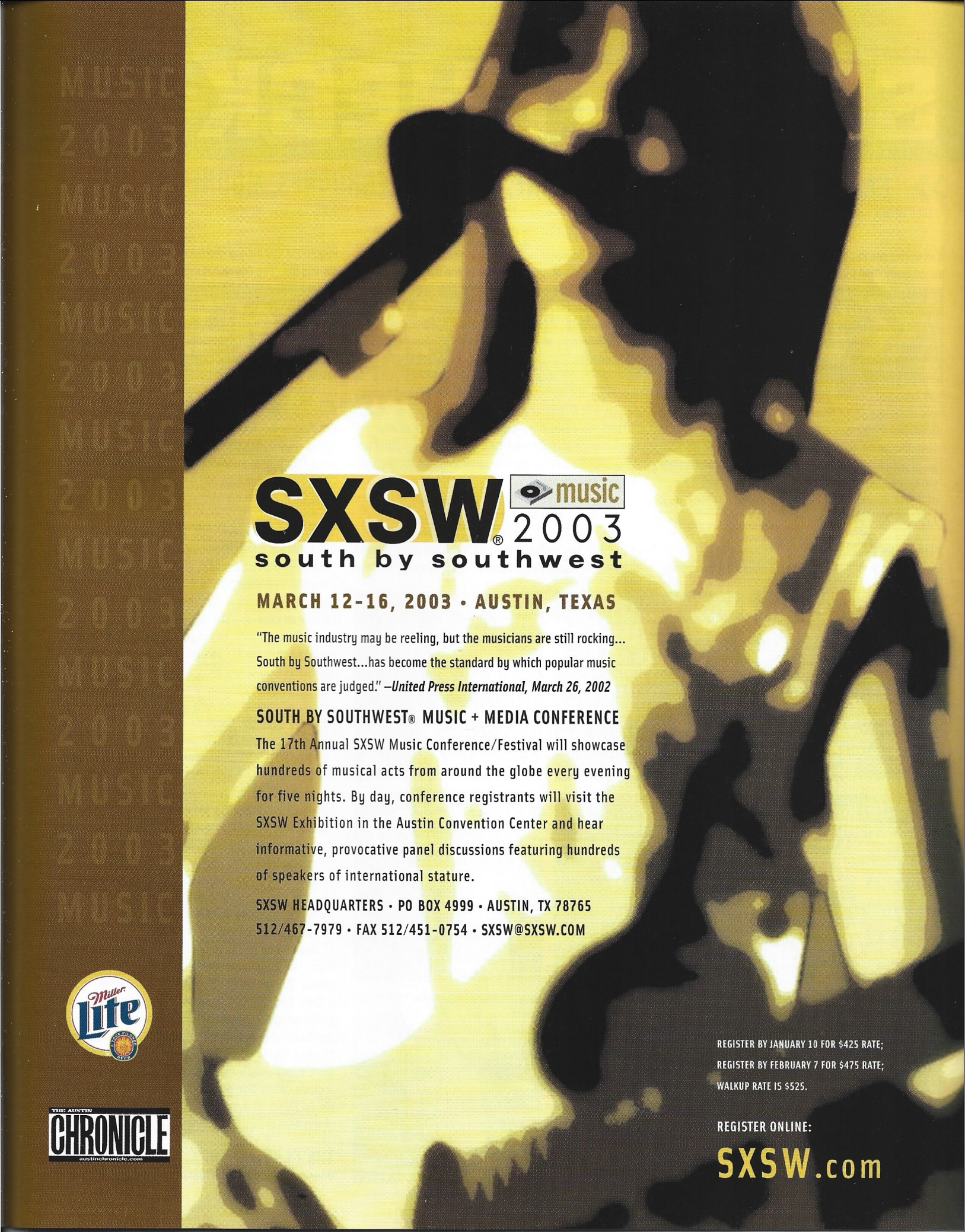
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SOUND CHECK »

» GARAGE ROCK 101: MUSIC MACHINE, LYRES, GREENHORNES, MOONEY SUZUKI

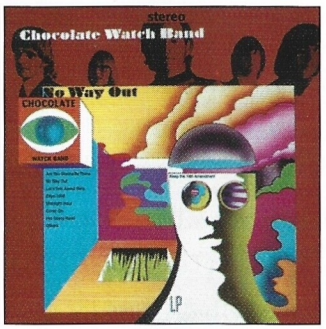
It all started one day in 1966 when mom left the car parked in the driveway. That freed up the garage for some pimply high-school combo to set up its dirt-cheap electric guitars and a battered drum kit and start flailing away on ragged versions of shit-hot current singles by the Stones, Kinks and Yardbirds. Call it garage rock or the first incarnation of punk (both terms were coined years later), but it was the raw sound of suburban teenage America answering the British Invasion by creating R&B-drenched classics—with a dusting of psychedelia—that were all its own. If the recent rash of noisy, overhyped firing squads like the Strokes and Vines have left you covered with Hives, maybe it's time to switch your medication. Here's a fast-forward through Garage Land: the '60s legends, hotshots from the '80s revival and—bearing in mind the genre's apparent 20-year flowering cycle—a bouquet of current contenders for garage notoriety yet to come.

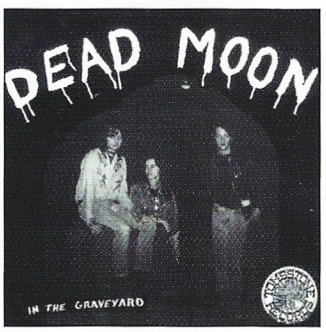
THE OLD SCHOOL

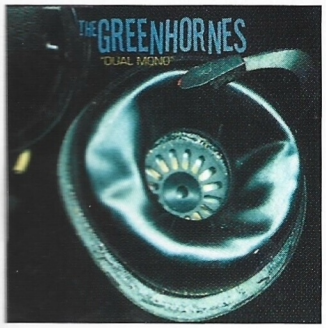
Music Machine *(Turn On) The Music Machine* (Collectables): When Sean Bonniwell explained on *American Bandstand* that everybody in the Music Machine wore one black glove for the group and kept one hand bare for the individual, Dick Clark looked perplexed. That was nothing compared to Clark's noticeable flinch when the black-clad L.A. combo launched into its scathing, psychiatrist's-couch confessional "Talk Talk," bellowed out by Bonniwell in a Jim Morrison-like baritone. Demented follow-up single "Double Yellow Line" is almost as crazed, and "The Eagle Never Hunts The Fly" smokes with Farfisa 'n' fuzz.

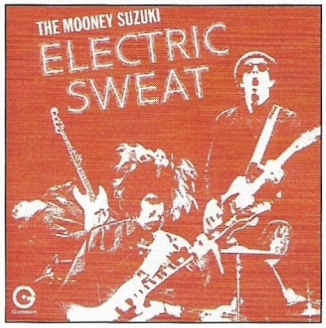
13th Floor Elevators *Absolutely The Best Of* (Sundazed): While Bonniwell may have feigned madness, 13th Floor Elevators singer Roky Erickson, who rode out the Vietnam War in a Texas mental hospital, was the real deal. Erickson's unique, banshee-like wail on the Elevators' only hit, 1966's "You're Gonna Miss Me," would've convinced any draft-board shrink that combat duty might not be such a good idea. Erickson's locoweed-ravaged pipes are pitted against Stacy Sutherland's blotter-acid fretboard wizardry and the maddening electric-jug heartbeat of Tommy Hall on cerebral stir-frys like "Fire Engine," "Levitation" and "Roller Coaster."

Chocolate Watchband *No Way Out* (Sundazed): As plainly seen in the 1967 teenage-rebellion flick *Riot On Sunset Strip*, nobody nailed Mick Jagger's pout and toothpick-legged, mincing pirouette better than the Chocolate Watchband's snake-hipped frontman Dave Aguilar. "Are You Gonna Be There (At The Love-In)" and "Let's Talk About Girls" are era-defining blends of punk attitude with 'shroom-laced suburban mind expansion. The Bo Diddley-like "Gone And Passes By" fires everything in this Cali outfit's arsenal: Aguilar shaking the bejeezus out of the maracas, then wailing on harp over suspended *Aftermath*-like vibraphone chords, while Sean Tolby and Mark Loomis add plenty of 12-string Rickenbacker distortion and electric-sitar fairy dust.









THE CHEERLEADING SQUAD

Chesterfield Kings *Night Of The Living Eyes* (Mirror): "Everybody got that look from the first Turtles LP," says Greg Prevost of Rochester, N.Y.'s Chesterfield Kings, explaining how wide-wale corduroys, tattersall vests and turtlenecks became *de rigueur* for the neo-garage explosion of the '80s. Rooting through huge record collections for inspiration, the Kings cut letter-perfect versions of '60s staples like "I Ain't No Miracle Worker" (by the Brogues) and "Don't Tell Me No Lies" (by Creedence Clearwater prequel band the Golliwogs). Helmed by Prevost and Andy Babiuk, the Kings were top brass in a small army of Brian Jones-coiffed, Cuban-heeled groups that also included the Vipers, Fuzztones and Cynics.

Lyres *On Fyre* (Matador): When Lyres wildman Jeff Conolly stood onstage behind his cheesy little portable organ, he assumed the role of a World War II ack-ack gunner strafing friend and foe alike with sonic tracer bullets. Blistering originals like "Don't Give It Up Now" and the tremolo-waterlogged sound of "Help You Ann" are mind-wobbling enough to induce vertigo. Boston's Lyres were anything but paint-by-numbers poseurs, however. The obvious sincerity of the plaintive "Not Like The Other One" and the quasi Tex-Mex swagger of "Never Met A Girl Like You Before" helped blur the boundaries between neo-garage and indie rock.

Dead Moon *In The Graveyard* (Tombstone): No one had more right to stoke the '60s embers than Fred Cole, whose Lollipop Shoppe landed its searing '67 single ("You Must Be A Witch") on the four-CD expanded edition of original genre touchstone LP *Nuggets: Original Artyfacts From The First Psychedelic Era*. Dead Moon, with Cole's tortured shriek now 20 years farther down the road to oblivion, possessed the most frightening vocal trademark since the heyday of Erickson. When Cole screeches, "I'm in the graveyard!" on the pounding "Graveyard," it's enough to halt a posse of ghouls dead in their tracks.

THE CLASS OF '02

Greenhornes *Dual Mono* (Telstar): Granted, the Greenhornes

carry a big torch for the usual hall-of-fame platoon of one-hit wonders, but they don't really sound like anyone in particular—no mean feat these days. Their sincerity is unimpeachable on the Howlin' Wolf-style intro to "Too Much Sorrow," a move that plays to their strength: They don't have to hide behind uptempo arrangements. If singer Craig Fox sounds like anyone, it's Eric Burdon of the Animals. It's hard to believe this much soul is coming from a 26-year-old white kid from Cincinnati.

Mooney Suzuki *Electric Sweat* (Gammon): Even the mighty MC5 was once a sweat-stained little troupe cranking out fuzzed-up versions of "I Can Only Give You Everything" in smelly Detroit-area armories. NYC's Mooney Suzuki has skipped the apprenticeship and laid all its cards on the table. *Electric Sweat*'s title track and "In A Young Man's Mind" demonstrate a near-genius formula: conga-line, Fleshtones-like anthems played with the nitro-burning energy of the Motor City quintet. "Oh Sweet Susanna" is a blue-collar, bourbon 'n' beer, George Thorogood-style change-up that gives everyone three minutes to towel off.

Shazam *Tomorrow The World* (Not Lame): This Nashville trio has expanded the customary limey triumvirate of garage icons to include the ethereal vocal blitz of Roy Wood and the Move. (With maybe a couple of shakes of Mott The Hoople, Gary Lewis And The Playboys and the Tubes, too.) Phil Spector also gets a nod when guitarist Hans Rotenberry's sky-high vocals are stalked by a glockenspiel on "Nine Times" while Keith Moon-like Scott Ballew thrashes the skins into submission.

—Jud Cost

PUMPING ON YOUR STEREO »

STEVEN VAN ZANDT: TAKING BACK THE AIRWAVES

Steven Van Zandt: Alias Miami Steve, Bruce Springsteen's guitarist in the E Street Band. Alias Little Steven, solo artist/producer/political activist. Alias Silvio Dante, Tony Soprano's right-hand goombah. Alias garage-rock godfather, thanks to his popular syndicated radio show, *Little Steven's Underground Garage*, a Sunday-night FM tent revival with amps, guitars and fuzztone pedals. For two hours, Van Zandt proselytizes and spins tunes from every era. During a short break from *The Rising* tour, Van Zandt had a sit-down with MAGNET. He quickly forecast Silvio's reaction if the *Sopranos* wiseguy learned his daughter was getting snuggly with a hairy, pill-poppin', garage-band loser: "Ooohhh ... [*long, evil-sounding chuckle*] He would *not* be too thrilled about it. Silvio is *real* old-fashioned."

I guess I've always felt the need to be dealing with the big picture. I took my zeal for politics and found a new mission. I found that every single oldies station across the country had started to eliminate the '50s. Every classic-rock station eliminated the '60s. Now, the '50s and '60s are the Renaissance; they are the decades that people will be coming back to and studying for the next hundred years. And to have that eliminated from our radio waves is a fucking crime. You might as well eliminate Shakespeare from your theater class.

If you go to my Web site (www.littlestevensundergroundgarage.com), you'll see the "Roots Of Garage," the "Offshoots Of Garage" and more categories—what I call the "Family." So I play the cool '50s guys like Eddie Cochran, Jerry Lee Lewis. Then I got the whole British Invasion. The one-hit-wonders, *Nuggets* bands. Then the '70s—the Ramones, swear to God, I play 'em every week. Then there's at least 25 newer bands. The Chesterfield Kings, Vipers, the Cynics, you can't beat them. The Swingin' Neckbreakers—they were on *The Sopranos* the second show this year, playing in Adriana's bar—and the Shazam, Greenhornes, Cotton Mather, Creatures Of The Golden Dawn, Anderson Council, Boss Martians, Sugar Shack, Model Rockets, Mooney Suzuki. Mr. Brown out of Australia. The Vines, Hives and Strokes.

Keep in mind that when we started, this was not something commercially viable. Rock 'n' roll was simply a dead issue in terms of the mainstream culture. I got started on this three years ago and got involved with [the Cavestomp! garage-rock festival in New York]. Young people were starting to feel like, "Hey, it's all down to hard rock, rap or pop," [and] they know they oughta have more choices than that!

There are plenty of bands I'd love to sign, young and old. For example, I've always wanted to make the album that Richard & The Young Lions never got to make. They were a legendary garage band from Jersey, had three or four singles in the '60s. These older groups are still viable—the Troggs, for instance. The Creation, who re-formed [to play 2001's Cavestomp!]. The Electric Prunes re-formed for us, and lemme tell ya, it brought you right back to 1967.

[The E Street Band] encored with (the Standells') "Dirty Water" in Boston. These are the songs that are in our blood, our genetic make-up. "I Had Too Much To Dream Last Night," "Talk Talk," "Friday On My Mind"—a collective garage-rock upbringing. Obviously, we evolved to other places and didn't stay a garage band, but man, it's still in us. Those roots stay with you.

And the nice thing about that stuff is it was freaky then, and it's freaky now. It ain't about nostalgia. This stuff is truly timeless—the way any great art is timeless. They didn't know it was great art at the time, and they didn't mean for it to be great art, but that's how it is. It's gonna turn you on and inspire you and motivate you whenever you discover it.

—Fred Mills

[Go to www.magnetmagazine.com to read our entire interview with Van Zandt.]

«SINGLES/EPS

AM/FM
THE SKY IS THE NEW GROUND

What started out as a studio side project for erstwhile punk Brian Sokel (formerly of Franklin) has blossomed into a dizzy ride on the indie-pop carousel. With bandmate Michael Parsell, Sokel is making a name for himself as a pop/rock savant. Kicking off this EP with the floating-in-space instrumental "A Start" and segueing into the countdown-tastic, guitar- and synth-swirling "Gone In Three" (co-written by Jay Laughlin and produced by Dave Grubb, both of Lenola), AM/FM nails the wonder and loneliness of an expansive unknown. Sure, there's a "Space Oddity" thing about it, but it's four songs, and damned if it ain't a blastoff. **[Polyvinyl, www.polyvinylrecords.com]**

—Brian Howard

DAN BOADI AND THE AFRICAN INTERNATIONALS
MONEY IS THE ROOT OF EVIL

This is exactly what you think an amalgam of Fela Kuti, disco and the Art Ensemble Of Chicago would sound like. Which, in case you have to know, means "great." *Money Is The Root Of Evil*—originally released in 1978 in a limited edition of 500—is the lone document of Ghana superstar Boadi's unsuccessful attempt to break into the American disco market. Traveling to the U.S. for a stab at dancefloor success only turned guitarist Boadi back to his homeland for another 13 years, until he moved permanently to Chicago. Twenty-five years down the line is better than never; give it a long-deserved chance to get those feet movin'. **[Aestuarium, www.aestuarium.com]**

—Andrew Earles

KIT CLAYTON VS. SAFETY SCISSORS
PING PONG

This three-inch CD comes encased in two more inches of clear plastic; look straight at it for a reasonable simulation of your vision after macular degeneration. Musically, the action is fast and furious—36 tracks fly past in 18:45. When these two laptop jockeys aren't sampling their actual ping-pong matches, they're volleying video-game chase sequences, chopped-up guitars, disembodied voices, suave organ interludes and shards of beat-blasted static back and forth. If you like your electronics peppy and boingy, this one's for you. **[Carpark, www.carparkrecords.com]**

—Bill Meyer

HAR MAR SUPERSTAR
"YOU CAN FEEL ME"

Spoon-fed irony for jaded indie slobs. Harold Martin Tillman ladles out huge glops of (snicker!) warmed-over disco spiced with hints of seamy electroclash and tight-pants soul. Think Beck circa *Midnite Vultures* with a Kelly Osbourne (a future Har Mar collaborator, by the way) wannabe on backing vocals. Yeah, it's that silly, and the joke wears thin before the platter has spun. The vinyl is even pressed on (wink, wink!) labial-pink wax. "EZ Pass," a b-side that attempts to add rapping-blues Stevie Wonder to the stew, doesn't help Har Mar's case much, either. Sigh. He clearly wants to be the blue-eyed Prince, but I knew Prince, Mr. Har, and you're no Prince. **[Record Collection, www.recordcollectionmusic.com]**

—Fred Mills

I AM SPOONBENDER
SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE

This epitomizes planet Earth circa 1957: a pea spiraling through blackness, decelerated by its self-imposed tangle of wires and trick mirrors and narrated by a glassy-eyed telephone operator. Wall-to-wall computers flash epileptically while silver-blooded aliens clad in seersucker suits fornicate to a soundtrack culled from the depths of Amon Düül II's darkest imaginings. Spoonbender's icy synths fuse with dissonant, paranoid drums for a dancefloor-savvy industrial drone that reads like *The Idiot Savant's Rough Guide To Film Noir*. No strings (or sequencers) attached. This is the apocalypse the way the Soviets intended. **[Gold Standard Labs, www.goldstandardlabs.com]**

—Ashlea Halpern

KING CREOSOTE
"SO FORLORN"

By brazenly invoking George Clinton (via a sample of 1971's "I Bet You"), the U.K.-based Creosote risks shtick, since every hip-hopper in the cosmos samples Clinton. He sidesteps it by recontextualizing funky lust as post-Prozac love arranged for strummy guitar and keyboard drone while warbling in an affecting Nikki Sudden drawl. (An alternate, more minimalist version is also present here as "And So For Lorna.") "Mantra Rap" is anything but a rap and features vocalist the Lone Pigeon (the King helped out on the Pidge's recent album) guesting atop a dreamy slab of piano-driven folk rock. **[Fence/Bad Jazz, www.fencerecords.com]**

—Fred Mills

MELT BANANA
666

When you consider that this veteran Japanese spazz-rock combo issued a five-inch single a few years ago, the appearance of this one, a whopping six-incher, isn't so odd. Despite the three tunes' collective running time of less than five minutes, there's a lot going on here. "Get The Head Back" trips over itself for tense seconds before plunging into straight-up riffage. "About" jackhammers toward what, for the Banana, could be dance music. "Neck On B1" dabbles in, shall we say, funk. But just because the group is flirting with discernable rhythm and melody, you won't mistake Melt Banana for Cornelius anytime soon. **[Level Plane, www.level-plane.com]**

—Bruce Miller

MONDO TOPLESS
"NO MORE"

The melodic garage pop of "No More" may be the advertised a-side, but trust me, it's the flip, "Panty Sniffer," that gets the jukebox nod. A truth-in-titling manifesto on the order of Napoleon IV's "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Ha!" it announces, "I like the way you wear your pantyhose/I wanna get me a pair of those/I wanna stick them on my nose!" Face-on-beaver aesthetics aside, this oily grunge hearkens back to the Northwest punk bands of the '60s. If you ever wondered as a kid if "Louie Louie" had dirty lyrics in it, here's your sense-memory come to throbbing, quivering life. **[Get Hip, www.gethip.com]**

—Fred Mills

ORANGES BAND
ON TV

Dare I say a garage-rock Twinkie with a creamy pop center? Yes, I do. Oranges Band guitarist Roman Kuebler *is* the Frank Sinatra of rock's resurgence. His vocals dip and bound around like Morrissey without the whining, and his group's sense of melody is reminiscent of Squeeze with a better distortion pedal or the Velvets with Jonathan Richman at the mic. Also think the Strokes with less money and some unwitting swagger. The guitars jangle, but they also grind, and if you aren't humming these puppies on the way to record store, you shouldn't be going there at all. **[Lookout!, www.lookoutrecords.com]**

—Beth Wawerna

ORGAN
SINKING HEARTS

"If you're tired of the scene and rock doesn't mean a thing," sings Katie Sketch, sounding like a smoother, softer Siouxsie Sioux, "and the girls look back and say lada dadadada duhduhduh lada dadadada ... it's time to go." Go where? Back to the future? Can revivalists revive what they weren't alive to see die? Apparently. For 14 minutes, this Vancouver band trips lightly through the '80s, tumbling down the well of time like so many others lately (e.g., Ladytron). The thin guitar and reverb-soaked sound feeds off the calculated spaces between changes, led by the warmth of the Hammond organ. Like a sadder, prettier Beat Happening or a less jangly Slumber Party, the Organ's melancholy melodies are intoxicating in a "someone put one of those damn roofies in my drink again" way. **[Global Symphonic, www.globalsymphonic.com]**

—Cyndi Elliott

PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES
"SAD GIRLS POR VIDA"

Does the American desire to escape everything have a soundtrack? Seattle's Pretty Girls Make Graves seem to think so. This is music fueled by unrest and the need to turn tail and flee the dire circumstances of life. Andrea Zollo wails as if being pursued by a tail-lashing, fire-spewing demon, while the interlocking hardcore guitars fall away beneath her like rickety bridges. Under most circumstances, this sort of torment is a nice place to visit on the way to somewhere more interesting and productive: PGMG makes it somewhere I'd want to reestablish my life. **[Sound Virus, www.soundvirus.com]**

—Tizzy Asher

SAMES
E.P.

I'm all for musical code-sharing, but I never

imagined a world where Polvo's signature tangle of art-rock guitar snakes could peacefully coexist with the sort of "future is ours to see, baby hold on to me" lyrical blather bravely/stupidly pioneered by Eddie Money. Yet this is exactly the sort of post-modern piss-take flaunted on "Live My Life For Me," one of five serrated tracks on the debut from this Durham, N.C., band. A collective tongue is planted in cheek throughout, but it never detracts from the perfect sound forever of "Plight Of The Bumblebee" or the surging melody of "I Wish That You'd Written This Song." Once the Archers Of Loaf court-jester routine sinks in, the enormity of the Sames' achievement is apparent. **[Pox World Empire, www.poxworldempire.com]**

—Corey duBrowa

STARFLYER 59
CAN'T STOP EATING

This California trio nips only at the heels of Luna in terms of longevity in these Anglo-obsessed, mood-rock stakes. (Wait, is the Ocean Blue still playing state fairs?) But breathy singer and guitarist Jason Martin makes his pop music maudlin without a wordy mess or a sloppy note; the five songs on *Can't Stop Eating* are almost Victorian in their pristine, single-note reverbed guitar leads and icy keyboards. Bittersweet and worthy of the repeat button after your next breakup, "Happy Birthday John" is the best song SF59 never wrote (that honor goes to Damien Jurado). "I've played all the chords/And I guess I get bored," Martin sings on "Give Up The War," but with sticky-sweet battles of the bulge such as *Can't Stop Eating*, I wouldn't push away just yet. **[Tooth & Nail, www.toothandnail.com]**

—Matthew Fritch

WRENS/FIVE MOD FOUR
THE WRENS/THE FIVE MOD FOUR

Longtime MAGNET heroes the Wrens spit out short pop treats with quirky glee on their side of this split. The three songs include one that dates back to 1991; the band itself has been on hiatus for four years. In particular, "45'er" spirals out of the speakers with delirious guitars and shiver-inducing vocal harmonies. Picture the Shins with a bolder psychedelic sheen. The Five Mod Four rounds things out with mild-mannered indie rock reminiscent of the Modern Lovers. Michael Wojtasiak's slightly off-key, Jonathan Richman-esque vocals drag bouncy jangling guitars in their wake. The result is easily digestible, but the songs are only vaguely catchy, with melodies that don't quite reel you in. **[No Karma, www.nokarma.com]**

—Joshua Leeman

XIU XIU
CHAPEL OF THE CHIMES

Just as discerning listeners were preparing to stick a fork in the new post-punk movement, along slide these art-school action figures to thoroughly confuse matters. Harry Partch, the Kronos Quartet and early OMD in bed together should spell disaster, but I have to disagree with my impulses when Xiu Xiu is pulsating through the room. Experimental and out of its head without being non-musical, the band tricks you into digging something a little more pretentious than is normally allowed. The best track is called "Jennifer Lopez," and *Chapel* ends with a psychotic hissyfit that's barely recognizable as New Order's (or, depending on how you want to cut it, Joy Division's) "Ceremony." **[Absolutely Kosher, www.absolutelykosher.com]**

—Andrew Earles

YEAH YEAH YEAHS
MACHINE

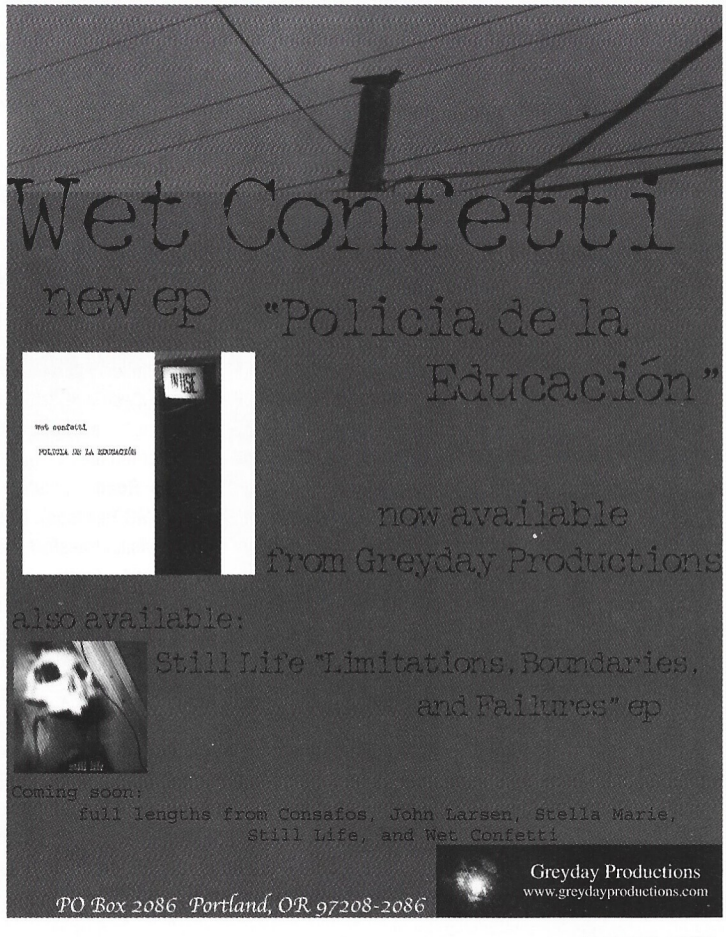
Next to the garage appeal of the relatively reserved White Stripes, the YYYs deliver raunchier, fuck-or-fight grit. "Machine" blows away their excellent five-song debut—no cognitive disassembly required, no need to scratch your Strokes mullet. The crafty Karen O sounds like a messier PJ Harvey singing through a payphone, with only drummer Brian Chase and guitarist Nick Zinner behind her. The guitar is so hot it singes, stalking O with a propeller-powered, gargantuan machine-gun riff. While much has been made of her sexiness, it's refreshingly genuine and playful; "I'll dig you up!" O sings on "Graveyard," a Hendrixian mix of "Shakin' All Over" and Sonic Youth's version of "Beat On The Brat." For these exhaustingly good seven minutes, the YYYs don't fake a thing, and it's obvious they're far from done injecting adrenaline and character into the comatose body of rock. **[Touch And Go, www.tgrec.com]**

—Cyndi Elliott

THALIA ZEDEK
YOU'RE A BIG GIRL NOW

Zedek, whose "outta the way, buster," Johnette Napolitano-like vocal leads were always a delight in Come, slows things down to a dead crawl on this six-song EP. A cover of the Velvet Underground hymn "Candy Says" is taken at such a funereal pace that Zedek has time to wring the song like a dishrag. "No Substitutions" teams up Zedek with the aching viola of David Michael Curry (Willard Grant Conspiracy) for a marvelous, bone-grinding seven-minute dirge that makes Dirty Three songs seem like absolute toe-tappers by comparison. **[Kimchee, www.kimcheerecords.com]**

—Jud Cost



REISSUES

>> BOB DYLAN, ELVIS COSTELLO, LOU REED, INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

You can easily mingle with ghosts in London. Using a book of the original photos as a guide, you can stand in the same Russell Square flowerbed where Dezo Hoffman captured the Beatles in 1963. Because Green Pajamas frontman Jeff Kelly is so entranced with neo-Raphaelite poet Elizabeth Siddal, he and I visited her gravesite in Highgate Cemetery when the Pajamas played London in 1999. To reach the old Victorian burial ground, you must first walk through Waterlow Park, extolled by the Kinks' Ray Davies in his songs "Misty Water" and "The Village Green Preservation Society." With its collapsed tombs and weed-choked walkways, Highgate—used by Bram Stoker for a particularly chilling scene in *Dracula*—is as dank and forbidding as Waterlow is idyllic. We bribed our guide to duck through overgrown shrubbery, down a long-forgotten path, to find Siddal. The beatific smile on Kelly's face was, like the MasterCard ad says, priceless.

Bob Dylan

Green Pajamas *Narcotic Kisses* (Camera Obscura): Trapped in a neo-Gothic fog of vampires, demons and love gone wrong, this batch of obscure singles and unreleased songs—available in 2001 as an LP whose entire pressing could've fit under Kelly's bed—plays as well as any recent Pajamas album proper. "The Ravenna Witch," introduced by keyboard passages unconsciously borrowed from *The Exorcist* soundtrack, swirls feverishly in a laudanum haze. "These Are The Best Of Times" straps Kelly to a laboratory table, where he willingly accepts a blood transfusion from John Lennon. "Highgate," one of six bonus tracks added here, finds Kelly standing, Heathcliff-like, above the cemetery, illuminated by lightning and pondering the mystery of the dead souls interred there.

Incredible String Band *The Incredible String Band* (Sepia Tone/Elektra): This Scottish group's 1966 maiden effort, unlike its more ballyhooed follow-ups, is mostly guitars, fiddles and brittle vocal harmonizing. As musically eclectic a combo as U.S. gonzo folkies the Holy Modal Rounders, the ISB—Robin Williamson, Mike Heron and Clive Palmer—blended ancient British ballads with bluegrass and a pinch of ragtime. "Dandelion Blues," a fingerpicking delight, sounds like a Celtic Bill Monroe. The ISB (without Palmer) became favorites on America's hippie ballroom circuit thanks to trippier efforts like 1968's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, cut with more exotic axes: sitar, chahanai, oud and gimbri. The band's debut—now remastered and featuring its original U.K. cover art—plays its cards closer to the vest.

Elvis Costello *Armed Forces*; *Imperial Bedroom*; *Mighty Like A Rose* (Warner Archives/Rhino): Although his third album, 1979's *Armed Forces* (like all of Rhino's recent Costello reissues, it's paired with a bonus disc), filed off some of his rough edges, it remains one of his most telling shots. Fair warning to Bush, Rumsfeld and Ashcroft: The time seems ripe for the LP's anti-fascist anthems ("Oliver's Army," "Goon Squad") to fall on fertile ground once again. The extra disc contains 1979's entire *Live At Hollywood High* EP session, whose warp-speed "Mystery Dance" might do permanent sacroiliac damage. *Imperial Bedroom* was Costello's 1982 return to heavily produced pop after the country twang of *Almost Blue*; his punk days were long gone. Frankly, the most exciting song here is a stomping bonus-CD cover of the Merseybeats' "Really Mystified." "The Other Side Of Summer," with its angelic harmonies and *Beach Boys Love You* roller-rink organ, is a breathtaking opener for 1991's *Mighty Like A Rose*. But nothing else on the album quite measures up, and how a vocal-clinker-laden demo of Johnny Cash's "I Still Miss Someone" escaped the shredder remains a mystery.

Lou Reed *Transformer* (RCA/BMG Heritage): Chalk up the visual transformation of Reed—from Velvet Underground street-smart wiseguy to mascara-and-lipstick glam-rock prince (with a slight dusting of the Frankenstein monster)—to *Transformer* co-producers David Bowie and Mick Ronson. The 1972 album, with its stinging Ronson guitar leads, was a heavily sculpted step forward in Reed's solo career ("Make Up" is accompanied by tubas; piano and strings augment "Perfect Day"). "New York Telephone Conversation" has Bowie nervously doubling Reed's vocal, a role formerly filled by Velvets drummer Moe Tucker. "Walk On The Wild Side"—a mind-boggling top-20 single (the line "even when she was giving head" was plainly audible)—is Reed's oozing, perfectly rendered tribute to mentor Andy Warhol's posse of drag queens, hookers and speed dealers. "Hangin' 'Round," yet another in a long line of chugging, rhythm-guitar-fueled rockers, proves Reed could do Velvets even without his former bandmates.

Bob Dylan *Bootleg Series Volume 5: Bob Dylan Live 1975—The Rolling Thunder Revue* (Columbia/Legacy): After unleashing a tidal wave of music that all but defined the '60s, Dylan pretty much took the first half of the '70s off. By the time he'd assembled the band for the Rolling Thunder Revue—featuring Joan Baez, longtime sidekick Bobby Neuwirth and a phalanx of electric guitarists that included T-Bone Burnett, Roger McGuinn and the ubiquitous Ronson—public interest had been whipped to a froth. The real joy of this two-disc set (with sound-truck recordings from the Boston, Worcester, Cambridge and Montreal shows) comes from full-band reworkings of classics like "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and naked versions of staples like "Blowin' In The Wind" (sung with Baez in a stirring revisiting of the Sonny & Cher formula: One crusty male voice plus one female songbird equals genius). Whether stripped to the bone ("Love Minus Zero/No Limit") or with the 12-piece band rocking like armageddon behind him ("It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry"), it's some of the most emotionally wracked, exhilarating music Dylan ever committed to wax.

—Jud Cost

[Camera Obscura, www.cameraobscura.com.au; Sepia Tone, www.midheaven.com]

TOP 10 OF 2002

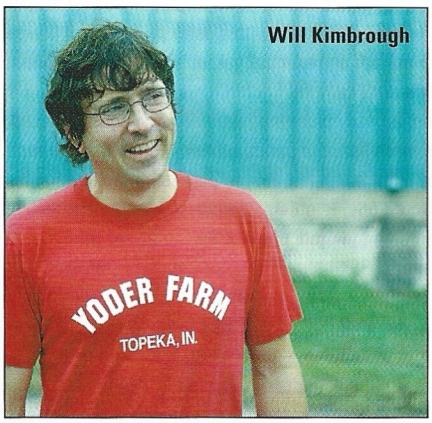
1) **Flaming Lips** *Finally The Punk Rockers Are Taking Acid* (Restless/Rykodisc)
2) **Bob Dylan** *Bootleg Series Volume 5: Bob Dylan Live 1975—The Rolling Thunder Revue* (Columbia/Legacy)
3) **Hasil Adkins** *Out To Hunch* (Norton)
4) **Ramones** *End Of The Century* (Sire/Warner Bros./Rhino)
5) **Dotti Holmberg** *Sometimes Happy Times* (Sundazed)
6) **Replacements** *Let It Be* (Restless)
7) **Lou Reed** *Transformer* (RCA/BMG Heritage)
8) **Jack Nitzsche** *Three Piece Suite: The Reprise Recordings* (Reprise/Rhino)
9) **Savage Republic** *Tragic Figures; Ceremonial; Jamahiriya; Customs* (Mobilization)
10) **Camper Van Beethoven** *Cigarettes And Carrot Juice: The Santa Cruz Years* (spinART/Cooking Vinyl)

AMERICANA

>> WILL KIMBROUGH

Will Kimbrough's musical beginnings were similar to those of most rock kids of the late '70s: banging away on Aerosmith covers in somebody's basement. His bandmates were also typical for the time. "You know the type," says Kimbrough. "Borderline juvenile delinquents, dope-smokin', green army jacket, Black Sabbath T-shirt—the whole deal."

Hailing from Mobile, Ala., Kimbrough's first band observed the hallowed Southern-rock tradition of naming your group after a nemesis. While Lynyrd Skynyrd got its moniker from a particularly nasty gym teacher, Kimbrough's Henry Gewin Band referenced a neighbor who complained about the boys practicing too loudly. Young Kimbrough was into both punk and Skynyrd, though his music has evolved past the crash 'n' burn sound: "It's probably the whole musician thing that it's hard to be a punk when you can play, even though you like it and admire it and like the spirit. I'm trying to keep the spirit at least in the fact that I don't want to compromise my thing."



Will Kimbrough

As heard on his second album, *Home Away*, Kimbrough's thing is power pop, cracked folk, Beatlesque jangle and what writers who can't think call "thinking-man's rock." After opening with the folky, Ozark Mountain Daredevil-flavored "Piece Of Work," the album changes styles with nearly every song, moving through a loser's lullaby ("Champion Of the World"), a guitar-pop fastball ("Letdown") and tracks peppered with muted trumpet ("War Of Words"). Known for his guitar playing, Kimbrough is now winning props for his voice, which, much to his amusement, is most often compared to that of ex-Crowded House frontman Neil Finn.

Tired of the major-label intrigue that sandbagged his '80s outfit Will & The Bushmen (who were signed to SBK, the same label as Vanilla Ice), Kimbrough now releases his albums through his own imprint, Waxy Silver. When not pursuing his career as a solo artist, Kimbrough pays the bills as a guitar-for-hire behind Josh Rouse, Garrison Starr, Todd Snider and Kim Richey. He was also part of a short-lived-yet-killer Nashville band called the bisquits; according to Kimbrough, the group's only release, a self-titled album from 1993, is literally 10 copies shy of being out of print.

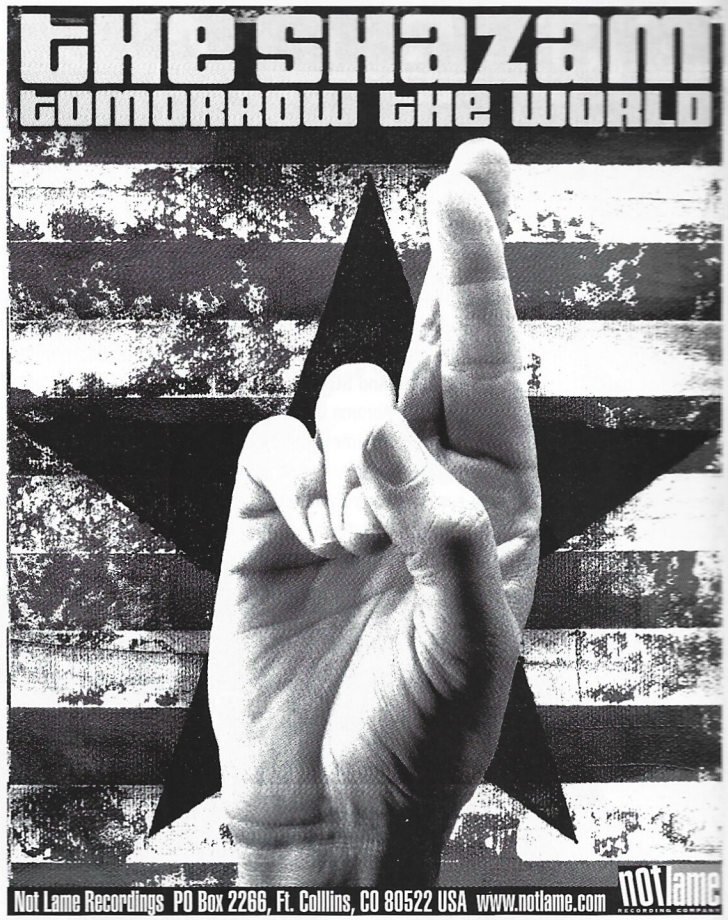
"Quite frankly, we were a great bar band—whatever that curse is," he says. "It was kind of an NRBQ kind of thing. If you were at 20 shows, you like the records a lot more."

—Robert Baird

[Waxy Silver, www.waxysilver.com]

TOP 10 OF 2002

1) Guy Clark *The Dark* (Sugar Hill)
2) Dave Alvin *Out In California* (HighTone)
3) Uncle Tupelo *89/93 Anthology* (Columbia/Legacy)
4) Kasey Chambers *Barricades & Brickwalls* (Warner Bros.)
5) Buddy Miller *Midnight And Lonesome* (HighTone)
6) Blasters *Trouble Bound* (HighTone)
7) Mary Gauthier *Filth & Fire* (Signature Sounds)
8) Ryan Adams *Demolition* (Lost Highway)
9) Steve Earle *Sidetracks* (E-Squared/Artemis)
10) Tandy *The Letdown 1997-2000* (Gammon)



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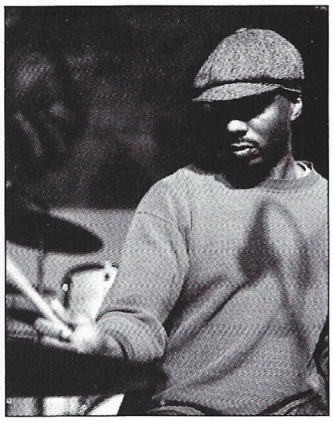
FREE/JAZZ

>> STICKS AND STONES, CECIL TAYLOR, TRAPIST, GOLD SPARKLE BAND

Everyone covered in last issue's column was at least 50 years old. To avoid causing anyone to sing "Young Man's Blues," let's start by paying respect to a trio with two players on the tender side of 30. The members of **Sticks And Stones**—alto saxophonist Matana Roberts, bassist Josh Abrams and drummer Chad Taylor—currently live in different cities, but they first got together on Sundays at the Velvet Lounge, the fabled Chicago jazz club that hosts jam sessions where young players can learn the old-fashioned way: by performing with older, more experienced musicians. Sticks And Stones' self-titled debut (on 482 Music) shows the group has surmised how to swing a good tune, whether it's an original or the moody Lee Perry gem "Sons Of Slaves." Abrams' resonant figures hold down the rhythmic fort, enabling Taylor to accelerate the tempo or drop it altogether without undermining the music's coherency. Roberts has a just-sweet-enough tone and a knack for unwinding a melody, then rewrapping it into new and elegant shapes.

Sticks And Stones



I don't know if everyone in the Austrian trio **Trapist** is a youngster, but when I saw drummer Martin Brandlmayr perform recently with his other band, Radian, he looked like he could still get carded. Trapist's roots are in free improvisation, not jazz, but like Sticks And Stones, Brandlmayr, double bassist Joe Williamson and guitarist Martin Siewert use pop forms and sounds to shape their improvisations; for example, Siewert is capable of a highly convincing twang that would earn him a spot in a blues or rockabilly outfit. The group's thinking is also shaped by the way computers and other electronics work. Filtering of information is important: What do they admit, what do they filter out? Trapist also works a lot with textures, like when Siewert overlays Williamson's resonant bowing with tiny static abrasions. The trio's debut, *Highway My Friend* (hatOLOGY), is a bit uneven, but its high points are as good as anything else I heard in 2002.

The **Unstable Ensemble** responded to Bloomington, Ind.'s paucity of improvised-music activity by hitting the road. Its second album, *The Liturgy Of Ghosts* (Family Vineyard), was recorded in churches, libraries and lofts around the Eastern U.S. The gigging and woodshedding clearly helped a band whose first album, 2001's *17 Ways*, sounded disjointed. Soprano saxophonist Marty Belcher, baritone saxophonist Joe Donnelly and guitarist Jason Bivins have developed a contrapuntal language that contrasts well-defined melodic progressions with episodes of sparse, meterless drift. They all work well together, but it's the horn players' imaginative and responsive use of the music's shifting spaces that keeps me engaged.

The **Gold Sparkle Band**'s sprawling *Fugues & Flowers* (Squealer) is another note from the road. Reed player Charles Waters, drummer Andrew Barker and bassist Adam Roberts live in New York now, but when they toured the Midwest in 2000 to support their last album (the punkily pithy *Nu*Soul Zodiac*), they coaxed their old trumpeter Roger Ruzow away from his day job teaching music to Atlanta public-school students. I can hear why; he and Waters have the sort of rare chemistry that can only be found and nurtured, not manufactured. Both are eager and aggressive players, but on the three-part epic "Second City Fugue," Ruzow's earthy emotionalism and textural imagination emit sparks that light a fire beneath Waters' more cerebral and historically conscious explorations.

Cecil Taylor so specializes in long forms that some reviewers felt short-changed when the restrained set he played with **Bill Dixon** and **Tony Oxley** at Canada's Festival International Musique Actuelle last May clocked in at only 51 minutes. The anticipation of hearing the pairing of Dixon's laconic trumpet and Taylor's dense piano architecture 36 years after they recorded the classic *Conquistador* for the Blue Note label may have been too great to satisfy. Better to deal with *Cecil Taylor/Bill Dixon/ Tony Oxley* (Victo) in terms of its ample musical qualities rather than any personal expectations. It's a study of overlapping relationships. British percussionist Oxley has worked with both men, and he seems to go back and forth between them like a host at a party trying to get things going between two people who've been out of touch for so long that they don't know what to say to each other. This isn't to suggest that Taylor and Dixon are mute. Taylor no doubt carries more sonic information in his head than many music libraries, and he's as ready as ever to lay out some themes and test their mettle. Dixon now magnifies his bruised utterances with a delay pedal, which makes each sibilant huff and reluctant yelp echo across the expanses of Taylor's aural canyons.

Dixon, an early pioneer of extended trumpet techniques, gave as much space to barks, squeaks and microtonal slurs as notes. In recent years, several players have picked up his gauntlet, and one, **Franz Hautzinger**, has actually gotten the old man's nod. Dixon contributes reams of analysis to Hautzinger's *Gomberg* (Grob), but honestly, said analysis won't bring the listener any closer to the music. Chuck preconceptions out the window and listen—you'll be amazed. Hautzinger uses aggressive amplification, often putting the mic right into the bell of his instrument to capture breathing sounds and magnify the horn's inner mechanical workings. *Gomberg*'s six pieces fall into the rapidly enlarging empty space where labels like free improv, avant-garde and noise wither from their own inadequacy. A giddy onslaught of lip-on-mouthpiece impacts proceed with such certainty on "W.M.," you feel like you're listening to a pre-programmed techno track; gradations of breath and white noise shade "Concert For Christina" in colors Aeolus might dream if he napped next to power lines.

—Bill Meyer

[Family Vineyard, www.family-vineyard.com; 482 Music, www.482music.com; Grob, www.churchofgrob.com; hatOLOGY, www.hathut.com; Squealer, www.squealer-music.com; Victo, www.victo.qc.ca]

TOP 10 OF 2002

1) **Jemeel Moondoc & William Parker With Hamid Drake** *New World Pygmies Vol. 2* (Eremite)
2) **Sticks And Stones** *Sticks And Stones* (482 Music)
3) **Oren Ambarchi & Keith Rowe** *Flypaper* (Staubgold)
4) **Joe Morris** *Age Of Everything* (Riti)
5) **Sten Sandell Trio** *Standing Wave* (Sofa)
6) **Trapist** *Highway My Friend* (hatOLOGY)
7) **Greg Kelley/Jason Lescalleet** *Forlorn Green* (Erstwhile)
8) **Spaceways Inc.** *Version Soul* (Atavistic)
9) **Daniel Carter/Laurence Cook/Peter Kowald/Jonathan LaMaster** *Principle Hope* (Sublingual)
10) **Wolfgang Fuchs/Jerome Bryerton/Damon Smith** *Three October Meetings* (Balance Point Acoustics)

AMPLIFIED

>> ARTICLES OF FAITH

Amid the conservatism and corporate greed that characterized the Reagan '80s, **Articles Of Faith** churned out melodic thrash with a leftist bent. Now, as the Bush era reveals eerie parallels to that earlier time, Alternative Tentacles has compiled the band's vinyl output and released it on two CDs (*Complete, Vol. 1: 1981-1983* and *Complete, Vol. 2: 1983-1985*). Although AOF owes a sonic debt to Hüsker Dü (Bob Mould produced AOF's first record), its beefy sound is also consistent with Chicago punk contemporaries like Naked Raygun.

MAGNET caught up with former AOF shouter Vic Bondi to discuss the state of the nation and his group's place in it.

Was this reissue a nostalgia thing, or did you hope that AOF's music could have an impact now?

Nostalgia is a concept of the past purged of its spirit. We put out the record to reconnect people to the past and to the spirit of that past. We were fighting many of the same enemies we're fighting now, so I think the music is relevant. "Buy This War" is truer with Bush selling Iraq than it was with Reagan selling Grenada. Sadly, it seems the historic constant for three generations is the willingness of cynical plutocrats to manipulate people into trading their lives for profit. As a new father, I'm even angrier about that than before.

Articles Of Faith

Do you find cynicism overshadows idealism as you get older?

Not overshadows—informs. The cynic in me identifies the problem; the idealist insists on a solution. A lot less is possible than I thought when I was 20. At some very important levels of society, things are getting worse. There's an institutionalized level of contempt for common decency among the powerful and wealthy that is compromising the best ideals of this country and of ordinary people. Powerless people dream of power; powerful people dream of abuse of power.

Are punk/hardcore bands more apt to join the system rather than fight it these days?

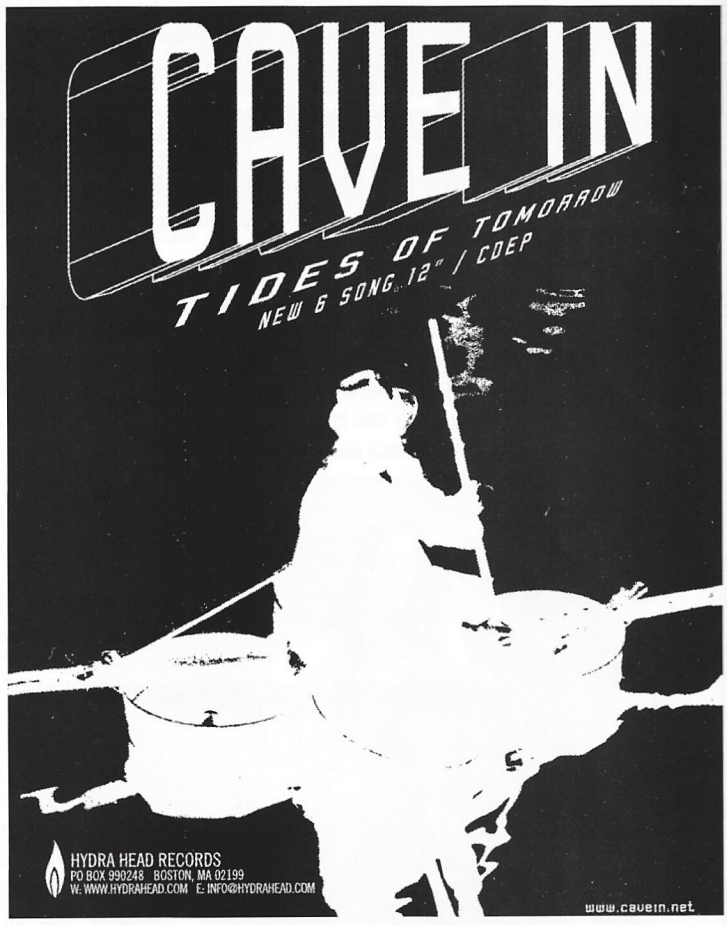
I don't necessarily begrudge a band like the Buzzcocks for selling their music for commercials; I know how hard it is to grow older and try and make a living as a musician. But Fugazi and the Ex have managed to update the hardcore sound and carry the hardcore ethic into the 21st century ... If P.O.D. can be stars with a "hard" sound, even as they shill that conformist Christian shit, it proves just how bankrupt the sound without the spirit is.

—Matt Ryan

[Alternative Tentacles, www.alternativetentacles.com]

TOP 10 OF 2002

1) Hot Water Music *Caution* (Epitaph)
2) Queens Of The Stone Age *Songs For The Deaf* (Interscope)
3) Snapcase *End Transmission* (Victory)
4) Avail *Front Porch Stories* (Fat Wreck Chords)
5) Distillers *Sing Sing Death House* (Hellcat)
6) Trial By Fire *Ringing In The Dawn* (Jade Tree)
7) Mudhoney *Since We've Become Translucent* (Sub Pop)
8) Deride *First Round Knockout* (Music Cartel)
9) Bad Religion *The Process Of Belief* (Epitaph)
10) Forgotten *Control Me* (BYO)



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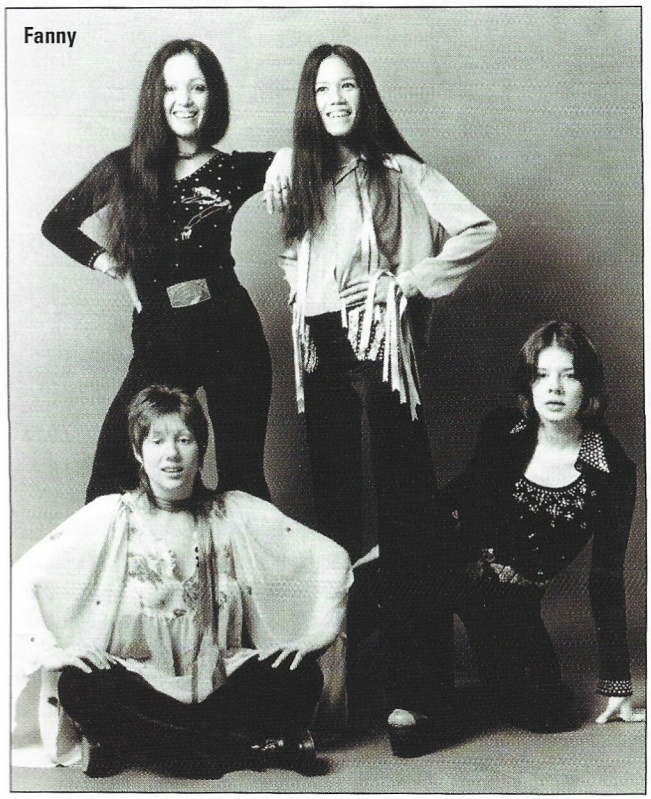
COLLECTIBLES

>> FANNY, CALEXICO, RADIO BIRDMAN, SAND RUBIES, NEW CHRISTS

Since opening its virtual doors in August 1999, the Internet-only Rhino Handmade label has unearthed some of the coolest (Beefheart, Stooges), obscurest (Essra Mohawk, Jack Webb) and just plain out-there (Fugs, Wild Man Fischer) archival offerings ever. So surely a four-disc boxed set of proto-grrrl rock will put lead in your pencil (or pudding in your pudendum). **Fanny**, once described by David Bowie as "extraordinary—they wrote everything, they played like motherfuckers," treaded the boards and recorded for Reprise, issuing four albums (including one produced by Todd Rundgren) circa 1970-73. I saw the band live once and can testify that, the distraction of my drooling notwithstanding, the double threat of guitar-slinging sisters Jean and June Millington and the band's sexy-yet-tight brew of glam-my garage, steamy soul and pre-punk definitely kicked my scrawny teenage fanny. *First Time In A Long Time: The Reprise Recordings* collects 90 tracks (33 of them unreleased) along with the obligatory exhaustive booklet detailing the group's history. In a nutshell: Not only was the name Fanny not sexist (the Millingtons were/are considered rock feminists), had the band not laid the groundwork and booted open a few industry doors in its time, it's conceivable there would've been no Runaways, no Hole, no Bikini Kill, no Sleater-Kinney, no Donnas—you get the idea.



Fanny

For those tweaked by last issue's power-pop blowout, two timely, crucial reissues arrive by way of **Prix**'s *Historix* (Air Mail) and the **Scruffs**' *Wanna Meet The Scruffs?* (Rev-Ola). The Memphis bands were associated with Big Star and Ardent Studios during the mid-'70s; both were prominently featured on Rhino's essential *D.I.Y.* power-pop comps in 1993. The Prix sound was the quirkier, spotlighting Tommy Hoehn's upper-register, Chiltonesque vocals and Jon Tiven's complex arrangements; *Historix* brings together the band's rare 1976 self-titled EP plus some unreleased mid-fi live tapes. The Scruffs took a meatier, more rave-up approach, simultaneously mining the best of the Raspberries, Yardbirds and early Beatles (the debut album's sleeve was an homage to *A Hard Day's Night*). Two bonus tracks round out what pop aficionados routinely acknowledge as a legendary record.

Australian rock section: Just reissued are two **Radio Birdman** albums, 1977's *Radios Appear* and 1981's *Living Eyes* (both Citadel), replacing a pair of out-of-print mid-'90s reissues; both are essential even if you have last year's outstanding Sub Pop anthology. In addition to collecting the original studio material, they feature handsome booklets and a bonus disc apiece, 1976's *Burn My Eye* EP and the live-in-'77 *More Fun* EP, respectively. Rob Younger's post-Birdman outfit the **New Christs** gets a solid overview, also courtesy of Citadel. 1989's *Distemper* is a seething, Clash/Birdman-styled hard rocker considered by many to be one of the top Oz releases of all-time. The mid-'90s would see the appearance of a pair of 10-inch EPs, *Pedestal* and *Woe Betide*, now remixed and reissued on the 11-song *These Rags*. At the time, the band had a more psychedelic vision, reflected by covers of Love's "She Comes In Colors" and the Who's "The Seeker." The New Christs' fortunes have ebbed and flowed (mostly ebbed), and Younger has decided to put the beast to rest with *We Got This!* (Laughing Outlaw), a spiky, turbulent affair bursting with power-chord anthemism and garage-fuzz/surf-punk overdrive. One tune is prophetically titled "The Party Died," but the album makes for a memorable swan song.

Admittedly, most compilations blow. But the third Rough Trade Shops comp, *Rock And Roll 1* (it follows *25 Years* and *Electronic 01*), is like a mix tape from the gods. The 46-track double CD features classics by the **Stooges**, **Cramps**, **Suicide**, **Weirdos** and **Pere Ubu**; vault-skronk at the hands of **Pussy Galore**, **Halo Of Flies**, **Mudhoney** and **Guitar Wolf**; and recent waxings by **J Mascis**, **Clinic**, **Detroit Cobras** and the **Von Bondies**. There's also a howlin' essay from **Jon Spencer**, who observes of the sonic fire 'n' brimstone here, "[This is] like a special language or code—a shared secret. *Amen*!"

Perennial MAGNET heroes **Calexico** are now on their fourth not-in-stores release. Available only at the band's Web site or gigs, *Scraping* is a 68-minute live album (mostly from last January in San Francisco) that spotlights the Tucson group's improvisational prowess. Highlights include "The Crystal Frontier," "The Ride" and an 11-minute "Fade."

Speaking of Tucson, the **Sand Rubies** (formerly the Sidewinders)—the much-loved architects of that region's influential "desert rock" sound of the late '80s/early '90s—have just been boxed to the tune of 12 discs. *Sidewinders/Sand Rubies: The Very Best And Worst Of The Greatest Band In The World Who Played Desert Rock And You Probably Haven't Heard Of Them* (Blue Rose) collects five vintage concerts from the pre-Mammoth Records 1986-88 period as well as unreleased demos, rarities, covers, radio performances, a "mystery" disc titled *El Cuarandero* and a show from the band's '99 European reunion tour. A thick booklet of vintage press clippings rounds out this limited box.

—Fred Mills

[Air Mail, www.airmailrecordings.com; Blue Rose, www.bluerose-records.com; Calexico, www.casade-calexico.com; Citadel, www.citadel-records.com; Laughing Outlaw, www.laughingoutlaw.com.au; Rev-Ola, www.cherryred.co.uk; Rhino Handmade, www.rhinohandmade.com; Rough Trade, www.roughtrade.com; San Jacinto, www.sanjacintorecords.com]

TOP 10 OF 2002

1) Jam *At The BBC* (Polydor UK)
2) Bob Dylan *The Genuine Never Ending Tour Covers Collection 1988-2000* (Scorpio)
3) Acid Mothers Temple Family *Do Whatever You Want, Don't Do Whatever You Don't Want!!* (Earworm)
4) Yo La Tengo *The Sounds Of The Sounds Of Science* (Egon)
5) David Holmes *Come Get It I Got It* (13 Amp)
6) Who *Live Detroit Michigan* (Themusic.com)
7) Miles Davis *From Pangaea To Agharta & Somewhere In-Between* (Zipperdeke)
8) Rainer *The Farm* (Glitterhouse)
9) Syd Barrett *Have You Got It Yet?* (Laughing Madcaps)
10) Captain Beefheart And The Magic Band *Dust Sucker: The Legendary Bat Chain Puller Studio Sessions* (Milksafe)

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ROCK IS CRACKED

(continued from page 41)

and Korn (good); major labels don't need our help (bad). Indies "flood us with CDs seeking to gain exposure," which in theory could be good—particularly if we make some dough while giving 'em the exposure they're looking for. Ergo, since publicists charge clients for services (good), we'll charge for a similar service (double plus good!).

This is deeply troubling on two fronts. First, tiny labels and unknown bands, desperate for any press they can drum up, may buy into this. (Aren't tiny labels/unknown bands the ones that, paradoxically, most need press coverage but are least likely to have the financial means to subsidize it?) Second, other publications may follow suit if the business model proves profitable. In the meantime, of course, make sure you tuck a century note (along with a quarter-gram of toot) into those promo packages you send to MAGNET. We don't come quite as cheaply as NY Rock.

THE REVOLUTION IS ALREADY BEING TELEVISED

Fuck MTV and the increasingly dire VH-1. First off, I want my VH-1 Classic. Watching it, you can see everything from rare clips of '60s and '70s bands to all those guilty-pleasure videos from the '80s and early '90s. Granted, there's an oversampling of silly haircut groups from the fabulous dawn of the MTV era, but hey, one man's "Too Shy" (Kajagoogoo) is the another's "Mexican Radio" (Wall Of Voodoo). If you tune in the Sundance Channel, particularly on Friday nights, you'll encounter quirky videos, animation shorts, music documentaries (recently shown: turntablist film *Scratch*, punk/new-wave concert-footage movie *Urgh! A Music War*, Nick Broomfield's notorious *Kurt And Courtney* and the *Silver Rockets/Kool Things* Sonic Youth doc) and films with related content or soundtracks (the Air-scored *The Virgin Suicides*).

ACTUALLY, MAYBE IT HASN'T BEEN TELEVISED JUST YET

In late November, an open letter to *Rolling Stone* was posted on veteran grrrl-rocker Joan Jett's Web site. Penned by Maya Price, a musician friend of Jett's, the missive took to task the once-relevant magazine's "Women In Rock" issue, likening it to a T&A *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition. You could practically hear tooth fillings rattle from coast to coast, so earnest was the collective nodding of the heads of music lovers. Price, seething at the inclusion of the pop-lite likes of Britney, Shakira and Avril Lavigne under the rock banner, wrote, "By *RS* standards, rock is no longer a style of music but a trendy costume to be whipped up by expensive stylists. If the issue had been called 'Some Cute Girls With Top 10 Records Out Right Now,' I would have no beef with it. Corny as it may sound, rock is something which is still meaningful and even sacred to some of us."

To paraphrase a line from *Almost Famous*, do you ever love something so much that it hurts? In 2002, all you had to do was tune out the media chatter and fashion-industry white noise, open your ears and listen: The sound you heard was the sound of an old tube amp, a battered-but-beautiful Stratocaster and a never-say-die three-chord progression.

There was Wilco, easily one of 2002's heroes, eternally restless in its quest for the perfect note, and Ed Harcourt, seeking that same pure-and-easy note from across the pond. Or the groups of the new post-punk brigade, like Liars and Interpol, channeling density and rhythm with a startling ferocity of purpose. Or the mindwarping psychedelia of Enon and the Warlocks, bands operating at different ends of the spectrum (the former surfing a synth-heavy jagged edge, the latter plowing a drone-drenched groove) but each referencing several decades' worth of rock tapestry. Or the massive walls of cranial-denting skronk erected by ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead and Queens Of The Stone Age: young men in love with their guitars and the damage they can inflict. Or the post-teenage symphonies to God and anger-management strategies of Pedro The Lion and Damien Jurado, reassuring proof that faith in music's power as well as a higher power can and do coexist. Or the serene alt-country of Neko Case and the luscious modern pop of Aimee Mann—emotionally resonant music imbued with the ballsy, restless, yearning-for-a-different-world spirit of rock 'n' roll.

There are many more, of course. In a conversation with Cobra Verde frontman John Petkovic about what music means and the whole "rock is back" thing, he pointed out, "I understand it did come back in some ways in the popular consciousness. It may be more relevant or more timely. But someone says, 'Rock is back,' and I think that's funny. That's crazy. Because rock never went away."

Our sentiments exactly. **M**

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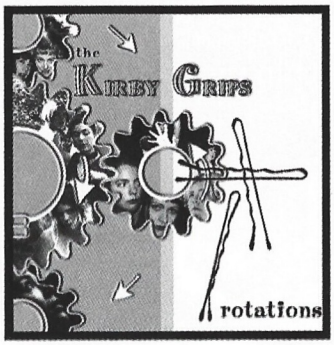

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TOM PETTY

(continued from page 70)

don't, then I'll quit making them.

Echo—and (1994's) _Wildflowers_ before it—were intensely personal albums that dealt with what was going on in your life: divorce, depression. Was _The Last DJ_ a conscious choice to move away from addressing such personal issues on record?

I don't know if it was conscious. I was feeling better and sort of back to my old self. I was really enjoying my work and was able to focus on it more. I didn't feel like I had any really big personal issues to write about.

You've been in therapy and no longer take medication for depression. Do you work better when you're happy?

Oh, yes.

Was the new record easier to make than _Echo_ because of that?

Yeah. When I'm happy, I find that I'm much more creative. My energy level is up. _Echo_ was a really, really hard record for me to make. I'm not sure I was always all there mentally. But a lot of people tell me they really like that record.

I think it's one of your best.

Really? I haven't heard it in so long. Once we finished it up, I could not listen to it. I really didn't even perform but one or two of the songs, I think. I just couldn't. The other day, my wife (Dana York, who married Petty in 2001) was telling me she listened to _Echo_ and that it was really good. I was like, "Oh, really?" She said, "Yeah, you'll be surprised at how great it is."

But you still haven't gone back to it?

No. I never play my own records. By the time I've made them, I've heard them so much that I'm never really drawn to putting them on. But when I do hear them, I'm sometimes pleasantly surprised. But sometimes I'm like, "Shit, I would have done that differently." Or, "I wish I would've done this."

Maybe you only hear the mistakes.

Sometimes. But some of them I like, like if I hear a song on the radio. I love all of those old singles. I heard "Breakdown" in the car the other day, and I was like, "God, for kids, we were really pretty good."

When was the last time you experienced musicmaking stripped back to its innocence—i.e., noncommercial—as you sing about on _The Last DJ_'s "Dreamville"?

For the Heartbreakers, it's a pretty innocent trip still. We just like to play. More and more, I find myself in love with the sound of the amps and stuff. We're just fascinated with guitars and amps and love to plug them in and get different sounds and just play. I think we live in our own world musically without paying much attention to anything else going on. We're just there, doing what we do.

Who do you consider to be your peers?

You mean like my age?

They could be your age or younger or older. Just musicians who you look at and go, "They kind of fit in to the sort of thing that my band and I do."

Um, I don't know ... I mean ... I've never thought about that much. [_Laughs_] I'm so opinionated, I hardly like anything. Most of the groups our age, we watched them sort of fall by the wayside as we went along. I don't have a lot of interest about what's going on these days. I really like the early Rolling Stones records.

What the Stones are doing now just seems like the polar opposite of what you do. They hardly make any new music to begin with. But the way they package these tours, they just hit you over the head with it.

Yeah, that's become a bigger-than-life trip. I like the Rolling Stones, but I preferred them when they were a little outside the law.

In the past, the first two rows of seats at your concerts haven't been sold, but then you've given them to the people who are sitting in the worst two rows of the venue—the thinking being that if people are willing to put out money for crappy seats, they must really be fans. Was that your idea? Do you still do that?

Yeah, it was my idea. I was noticing that the people down front were always the wealthy ones. There are the richest people, and they have the best seats. We can only see the first few rows, and that's not who I want to look at while I'm playing. I'd rather see people who want to participate in the music.

Bruce Springsteen has done the same sort of thing as well.

Yeah. It fucks the scalpers up, too.

Unlike Springsteen, Neil Young and Steve Earle, you haven't addressed September 11 in song. Why not?

I don't know. I had written most of the record by then, and part of me thought that it was such a tragic thing that I didn't want to dwell on it to write songs. It seemed above popular entertainment to me, like that would be trivializing it or something. I wasn't drawn to writing a particular song about it.

Do you think those musicians who did address it were successful?

I haven't listened to any of them. I mean, I heard some of the really hokey country ones. I heard some really bad country ones that seemed to me the equivalent of selling flags in the parking lot.

That's not too surprising, though.

No, it's not, not if you're an American. But any time all of the flags come out, somebody is going to die. That's what I think. Any time I see all those American flags—and I love the country and everything—somebody is going to die. I still think war is wrong. That's not really a popular notion anymore, but I think when you are killing somebody's little sister, you are just perpetuating violence. They're going to hate you forever, and one day, they are going to strike back. It's just such common knowledge that only love conquers hate, you know? That's thousands of years old, but it's true.

Did you think September 11 was going to have an effect on the way things are in America?

I was very surprised that it had no effect at all. I thought it would change all of our tastes immediately as far as violent entertainment and just the worthless crap. I thought it would center us a little more, like, "Wait a minute now, this is bad stuff. We're not going to respond to it because it is so violent and awful." But it seems as people, we get meaner and meaner and meaner. That has even been celebrated to a great extent—how tough and ugly and mean you can be. It's not smart. It doesn't end up in a good place.

You've been a longtime supporter of organizations and charities like Greenpeace and the National Veterans Foundation. Would you be so active with social issues if you weren't in the public eye?

Probably. That's just my nature. I think I could be even more active than I am, because I'm also lazy.

But for someone in your position, even the small gesture has a big impact.

It's a lot of responsibility, you know? It's funny to wind up in that position where whatever you say kind of comes back at you or will influence someone in some way. I'm only human. One day I might say something, then change my mind the next day. I try to be careful with what I say publicly.

Do you ever think about what you would be doing now had a career in music not worked out for you?

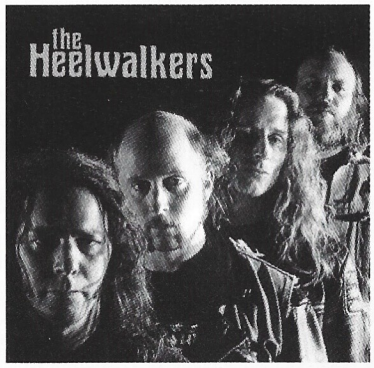
Oh god, I don't know. I was really lucky because from an extremely early age, music was all I wanted to do. I never even considered doing anything else or thought about the consequences if it didn't work out. I do remember thinking I probably wasn't going to make much money doing this. It wasn't like I was going to be a career kind of guy, because I wasn't going to go to college or anything. I just wanted to play music. It's funny that today you have people who actually prepare for this job like it's a career.

I know someone who went to college to major in the music industry. I was like, "What is that? What exactly do you do there?"

Well, that's ridiculous. They even have schools where you study to be rock 'n' roll musicians. That's hysterical. When we started, it was kind of like we were turning our back on that kind of thing. Nowadays, a lot of the bands are full of the people that you got into bands to get away from.

Do you still think rock is a young man's game? Or do you believe in the bluesman model of playing until you drop?

I think I have, because I'm 52. I certainly want to keep doing it, but I've left the game part. I'm not interested in playing the game or conforming to that degree. These days, to play the game is really an extreme commitment away from your music. I just want to play music, and hopefully I will still have an audience. [*Laughs*] But even if I didn't, I'd still want to play. We're lucky in that we do have an audience, and I don't know whether me and the group have ever enjoyed it as much as now. I don't think we've ever played as good as we play now. And that's not bullshit. I'm just as surprised by that as anybody. I certainly didn't expect it to go that way. Experience is nice. You refine what you are doing and start to find the heart of it. It's exciting. **M**



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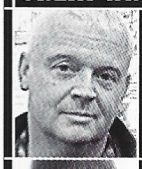

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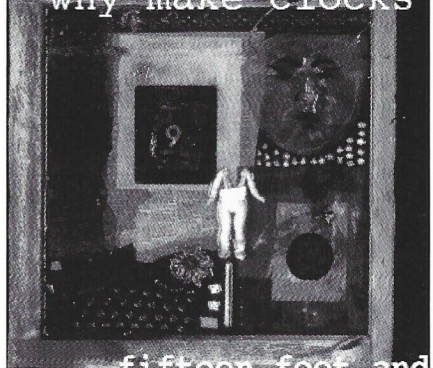

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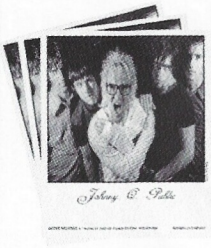

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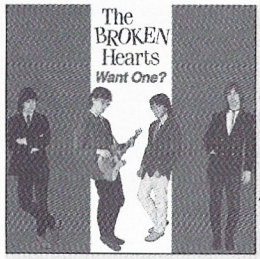

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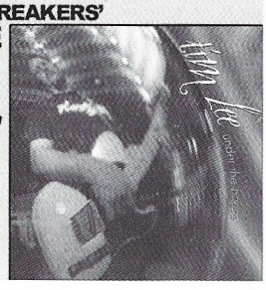

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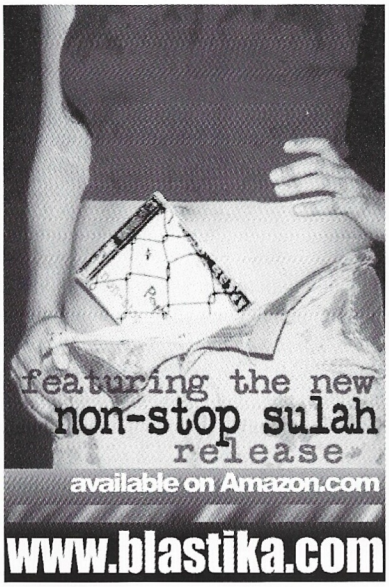

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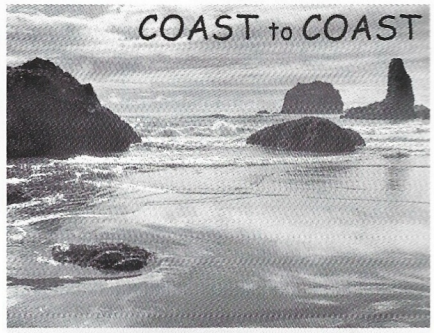

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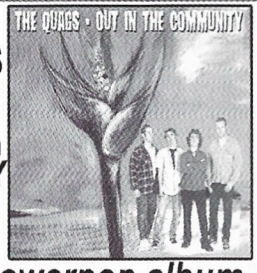

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THE BACK PAGE

Looking Back At 2003

BY PHIL SHERIDAN

Well, it finally happened. It took the combination of the Hives and Vines and Strokes and White Stripes, but it happened. Some 30 years after I left a record store clutching my first album—the Rolling Stones' *Hot Rocks*, if you must know—I have been liberated of even the tiniest shred of desire to be a rock star. I mean, I gave up the actual idea a long time ago, maybe as far back as August. But this nauseating wave of "new guitar" bands has managed to make even the idle fantasy of being a rock star seem absurd and silly and even pathetic. They've blotted out the standards for cool and abandon set by Mick and Keith, Bowie and Townshend, Strummer and Jones, Bono and Stipe, Westerberg and Cobain and so on. One more story about what a wild and intense and just-plain-rude rocker the Vines' Craig Nicholls is will push me over the edge. I will tear off my clothes and run naked, screaming obscenities, into the street, where I will smash the living fuckaroo out of every single album and CD I've ever purchased, borrowed, stolen or come to own by other nefarious means (including review copies).

I'm going to say this just once. To Craigy and to Pelle Fuquevist and to all the rich little Strokes boys: Saying you're conflicted and intense and depressive and brilliant is not the same as being any of those things. You are rank amateurs and a disgrace to the tradition. Shut up. Shut up now and forever. Thank you. I don't have the power to know where any of these bands will be in five years. But I know this for absolute certain: No one will care. They're worthless—'N Sync with guitars—and they will go away sooner rather than later.

And so, with that out of my system, I turn my amazing powers of precognition to our damn-near-annual look back at the year to come.

JANUARY

A hairy-handed gent runs amok in Kent. A headless Thompson machine-gunner wanders through the night. An excitable boy kills his junior-prom date and builds a cage with her bones. And Warren Zevon finally sleeps. Farewell, you perfect genius sonofabitch.

President Bush addresses nation, saying he's really, really angry at Saddam Hussein now.

In a statement issued by his publicist, Eminem announces his deep love for and abiding commitment to his new life partner, Moby. Yes, it turns out Marshall Mathers was simply in denial all along. There's a thin line between love and hate, Slim. Now grab those ankles.

FEBRUARY

Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey are killed in the crash of a small plane near Leicester, England. Zak Starkey announces the Who's 2003 tour will continue as planned.

In related news, Guided By Voices announces it's breaking up. Bob Pollard and Doug Gillard join Starkey and bassist Pino Palladino to play 75 dates as the Who. "It's about fucking time," Pollard tells MAGNET's Fred Mills.

The record industry announces a comprehensive plan for downloading music.

MARCH

Eminem wins the Oscar for Best Actor for his role in *8 Mile*. Saddam Hussein is named winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize. Fred Durst wins a National Book Award.

The Clash reunites for its induction into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall Of Fame. Eric Clapton plays a bitching solo on an all-star rendition of "Rock The Casbah." Meanwhile, in a single-family dwelling in suburban Philadelphia, a middle-aged white guy's head explodes.

APRIL

Courtney Love files a lawsuit against everyone, making it impossible for anyone to write, record or release new songs until her lawyer says it's OK. "I know my goddamn rights," says Love.

DNA tests requested by their record companies reveal Dave Grohl and Alanis Morissette are actually the same person. Morissette admits she wrote "You Oughta Know" about Courtney Love; Grohl admits he wrote "You Oughta Know" about Kurt Cobain. Krist Novoselic tells reporters he's "very confused" and not sure who he had sex with: "I just hope it wasn't Courtney."

saying you're conflicted and intense and depressive and brilliant is not the same as being any of those things.

MAY

Rolling Stone hires its seventh new editor in 18 weeks. Promising "edge" and "a new approach," Alf Landish announces his first cover will feature a picture of Alyssa Milano in a thong.

The record industry announces a comprehensive plan for downloading music.

JUNE

Wilco is dropped by its label after submitting a new album full of what irate executives describe as "fart noises made by Jeff Tweedy putting his hand under his armpit." Tweedy, realizing he now controls his new record, fires John Stirratt and Chicago Cubs manager Dusty Baker and lays off 5,000 line workers at a GM plant in Dearborn, Mich. The new album, finally released by K-Tel, is hailed as genius by MAGNET, *No Depression*, *Spin* and *Armpit Monthly*. As fortune would have it, a guy named Bob captures the whole turn of events in a series of original woodcuts, which go on display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

It's official. Nobody cares about the Osbournes anymore. Not even the other Osbournes.

JULY

Scratch That Itch, a new reality television show, debuts on MTV. The concept: Ten handsome men and a hot young woman with a serious yeast infection move into a luxury home cut into a cliff in Southern California. As soon as one of the 75 cameras catches a man scratching down there, he's off the show. The last man to avoid The Itch wins a million bucks and a case of Lotrimin AF. People watch.

The record industry announces a comprehensive plan for downloading music.

AUGUST

New *Rolling Stone* editor Rolf Weezle says the magazine will change its name to *Scantily Clad*. A scantily clad Katie Holmes appears on its first cover.

Rivers Cuomo, Rhett Miller and Chris Carrabba are trapped in a Manhattan elevator together for almost 72 hours. They survive by looking down at the floor and not saying anything to each other.

SEPTEMBER

A panel of really smart people from Princeton University releases the results of a year-long inquiry into exactly why Jimmy Fallon is popular. After ruling out talent, looks, presence and good material, the team announces, "We have no idea. People must just be really stupid."

Storytellers: Avril Lavigne premieres on VH-1. Frank Black debuts in a supporting role on *The Sopranos*.

OCTOBER

The Chicago Cubs, with Jeff Tweedy managing, win the World Series when—in the 11th inning of Game 7 against the Toronto Blue Jays—pinch runner Winona Ryder steals home, then denies it.

The record industry announces a comprehensive plan for downloading music.

NOVEMBER

Sweden is over and out, my friend. The new hotbed for punk rock: the happenin' Liechtenstein scene. *Rolling Stone* puts a hot Liechensteiner babe on its cover ("Rock Is Still Back, We Think!"), but the whole wave ebbs when a charter plane of major-label A&R reps can't find Vaduz and, out of fuel, crashes into the Alps.

DECEMBER

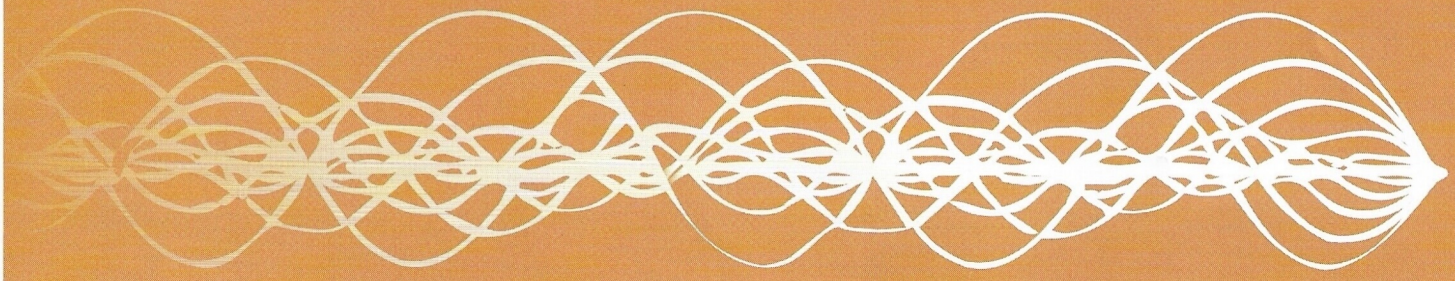
'N Sync announces plans for a reunion tour. *Rolling Stone*'s cover: "Pop Is Also Apparently Back!"

Putnam publishes a highly anticipated collection of Kurt Cobain's shopping lists, ATM receipts and what appears to be a note to Courtney Love: "C, Back around 8. K." The newly discovered mint of fresh Cobain material inspires Geffen to issue a five-disc Nirvana boxed set and Love to sue Johnnie Cochran.

The record industry announces a comprehensive plan for downloading music.

THE APPLES IN STEREO

VELOCITY OF SOUND



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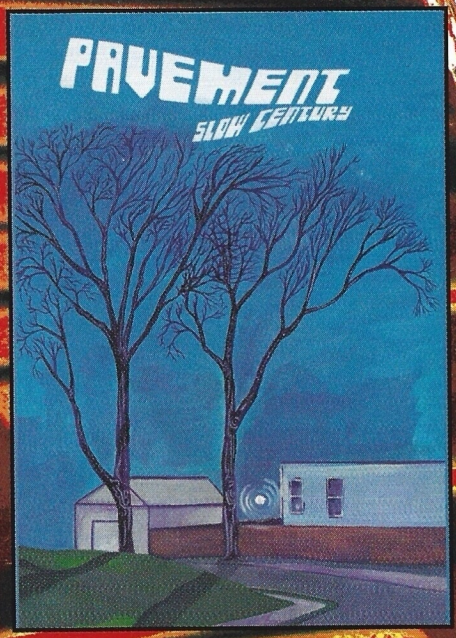

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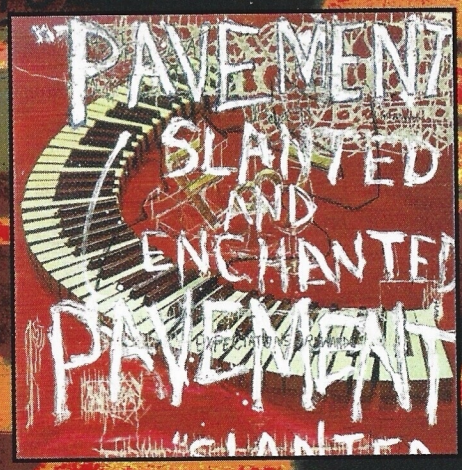

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